

TEXACO ON TRIAL • THE CANDIDATES ON HEALTH CARE

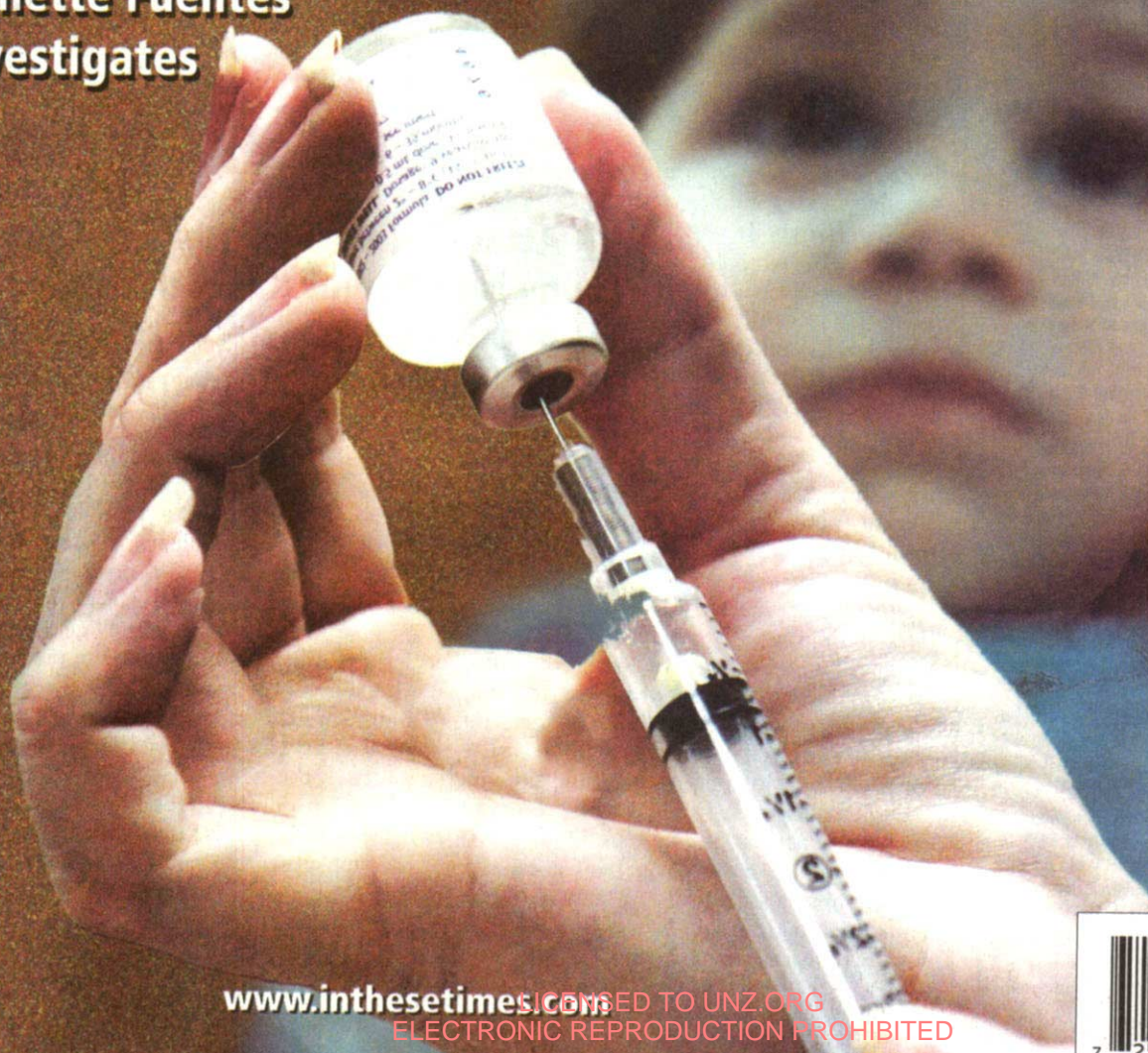
In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

December 8, 2003

Autism in a Needle?

Annette Fuentes
investigates



\$2.95 Canada \$4.50

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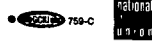
In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 28, No. 1) went to press on November 7 for newsstand sales November 23 to December 7, 2003.

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Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For **subscription questions, address changes and back issues** call (800) 827-0270.

Editorial correspondence and letters should be sent to: 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Phone: (773) 772-0100. Fax: (773) 772-4180.

Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through the IPA International Sales Cooperative at (415) 643-0161, or info@bigtoppubs.com.



Seed of Destruction

Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.) got a letter the other day from the Illinois chair of the Dennis Kucinich for President campaign. *In These Times* got a copy of the letter, too—after all, it was an open letter intending to provoke controversy over Jackson's decision to endorse Howard Dean.

Lance Del Goebel, depicting Dean as Bush's immoral collaborator, wrote, "Will you, Congressman Jackson, be explaining to your constituents that they should support Howard Dean because of the project undertaken by Texas Governor George Bush and Vermont Governor Howard Dean to dump Vermont's toxic waste on the poor Hispanic town of Sierra Blanca, Texas?"

The agreement to dispose of Vermont's low-level radioactive waste was signed by Dean and then-Texas Gov. Ann Richards. Although Vermont environmentalists opposed the agreement, they have declined to stigmatize Dean's role in the affair. "I was annoyed at the time and was kind of bothered by the fact that he didn't seem to care," Vermont Sierra Club President Lea Terhune told the *Des Moines Register*. "But he was never cozy with the environmentalists. He wasn't our boy, but he wasn't anybody's boy."

Kucinich, who *In These Times* has covered since 1977 when he became mayor of Cleveland, is raising issues in the campaign that other Democrats ignore. And for that we applaud him. We also appreciate Dean, who has impressed many with his articulate attacks on the Bush administration and with his ability to spark fresh enthusiasm among previously apathetic voters.

But at this point in the Democratic primary campaign, progressives need to be doing the things that could make a long-term difference—building networks via the Internet, registering voters, maintaining voter databases, fostering coalitions, focusing on defeating Bush, electing progressives, and skipping the pointless, non-strategic and too-often personal debates that divide us.

Del Goebel's letter to Jackson doesn't do any of those good things. Instead, the letter is all about taking one's eyes off the prize and sowing division among Democrats and inde-

pendent progressives.

After pointing out that in Vermont Dean rarely governed to the left and frequently governed to the right, Del Goebel concludes with a deeply critical attack on Jackson, who is, along with Kucinich, one of the most progressive members of Congress.

"Congressman Jackson," wrote Del Goebel, "your help was needed to stop the freefall working people and the poor have had to endure in America since 1980. You had a chance to do something bold, something innovative, to show your constituents that you really care about them. Instead you have chosen the same old worn out lesser-of-two evils argument that only serves to prolong the freefall of those Americans ... at the mercy of corporate sponsored America since 1980."

Jackson's endorsement of Dean is a blow to Kucinich. But Jackson and Kucinich still need each other. If Dean becomes president, it will take the combined efforts of many in Congress, led by politicians like Jackson and Kucinich, to do what they can to push Dean to govern to the left and to "help stop the freefall" that concerns Del Goebel.

Attacking Howard Dean because he isn't Dennis Kucinich won't get us one step closer to peace and justice for the world.

Dennis Kucinich is a genuine progressive. He voted against the Iraq war and against the Patriot Act. He has a plan for universal health care. His candidacy is an opportunity to frame the issues from a progressive perspective, and to do so from inside the Democratic Party. But the larger goal is to defeat Bush, build unity among progressives who must work together after the election, and create the capacity to put post-election pressure on the president, any president, to roll back the neocon agenda and enact elements of ours. Attacking Howard Dean because he isn't Dennis Kucinich won't get us one step closer to national health care, a progressive tax system, or peace and justice for the world.

—Jeff Epton

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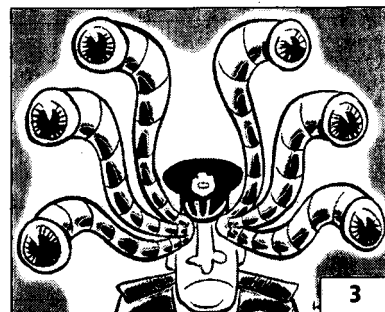
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WTO Harms Farmers

David Moberg makes an excellent case for pulling agriculture out of trade negotiations ("The WTO's Broken Promise," September 29). If agriculture and its deeply imbedded importance to society can be reduced to a commodity to be bought and sold on the world market, we may as well add education and health care to the realm of WTO negotiations. Lee Kyung-hae, the Korean farmer and activist who killed himself during the protests against the WTO in Cancun knew all too well that indeed, the WTO kills farmers.

Something is drastically wrong here. Farmers in the United States are paid less than they were 23 years ago while retail food prices have risen considerably. Multi-national corporations can, due to their monopolistic control of world markets, drive farm prices down worldwide, then through their vertically integrated structure, raise retail food prices. As Moberg explains, through dumping cheap commodities on developing countries, indigenous farmers are driven out of business. U.S. farmers are paid direct subsidies to keep them hanging on as they are forced to sell at below the cost of production and in so doing provide the mechanism for corporate agribusiness to destroy small farms worldwide.

What is the answer?

First, multi-national corporations must be prohibited from selling farm commodities on the world market if they were purchased at below the cost of production. Second, the United States must end its current system of direct price supports and return to a system of production controls, environmental protection payments and farmer-owned grain reserves. Third, we must understand that technology is not the answer to feeding the world, the food is already there to do that. Poverty, war, discrimination, poor distribution and greed are the main causes of hunger. The world can feed itself if we let it.

Interestingly enough, as I talked to campesinos during the Cancun WTO protests, I discovered that they understood this completely. They have no power to change the system. U.S. farmers on the other hand, who do have the ability to reject the dominance of agribusiness corporate control, seem ignorant of the ever-tightening noose that global corporations have slipped over our necks.

Jim Goodman
Organic dairy farmer
Wonewoc, Wisconsin

Consenting Adults

Paula Kamen should be congratulated for her great article with an exciting, pro-sex, truly feminist point of view ("Kobe and the New Currency of 'No,'" October 13).

Entering someone's hotel room is not consent and the freedom to choose whether and when to have sex at any time seems like an obvious right. This article is fantastic and hopeful and well put.

Risa Mickenber
New York

Close to Home

In Brian O'Grady reports that the Juan Diego Workers' Center was removed from Pulaski and Foster ("Work Space," September 29). Well, I have news for you. There never was a Juan Diego Workers' Center. The "shrine" that was there? The organizers placed it illegally in parkland. This is park property, open space that the community worked long and hard to get.

Here's what I don't understand. The city offers them a new spot—for free—and they won't go there because it's too far from home. I've been there and it's not that far, certainly not three bus rides, if these workers actually live in Albany Park. Maybe next time your reporter can actually talk to community residents to get an accurate perspective on what's going on. Mr. Landaverde and Ms. Aranda don't live here, yet they feel they

have the authority to dictate what should happen in this community.

Lisa Banuelos, President
Neighbors United
Chicago

Brian O'Grady responds: As a lifelong resident of Albany Park, I understand but have no love for the quiet hate that informs ward politics. Organizers are fighting for immigrant workers' right to have control over their working conditions, and this demands a relationship of respect between those residents who depend on unreliable, low-paying work and those who don't. Until Neighbors United recognizes the basic human dignity of their own neighbors, this conflict isn't likely to be settled soon.

There's more to the story...

In this issue, David Moberg writes about the Bolivian protests which took place in late October. Visit www.inthesetimes.com to read Adam Sayranides' profile of Bolivian presidential hopeful Evo Morales, who has led the fight against privatizing the country's natural gas resources.

Terry LaBan



Still Watching

Private industry moves in to compile personal data

By Dave Lindorff

Coming soon to a law enforcement department near you: The Matrix, Loaded.

Not the movie—something far more disturbing: the Multistate Anti-Terrorism Information Exchange.

In reaction to public outrage, Congress cancelled funding for retired Adm. John Poindexter's so-called Total Information Awareness (TIA) project at the Pentagon—even though the "T" was later changed to the more acceptable "Terrorism." But it turns out that a group of 13 states, spearheaded by Florida, have been working with a private company to develop a similar system designed to put everyone's records at police fingertips.

Matrix—developed with a \$12 million federal grant—was designed by Seisint Inc., which previously used its data-mining software to help insurance companies detect fraud.

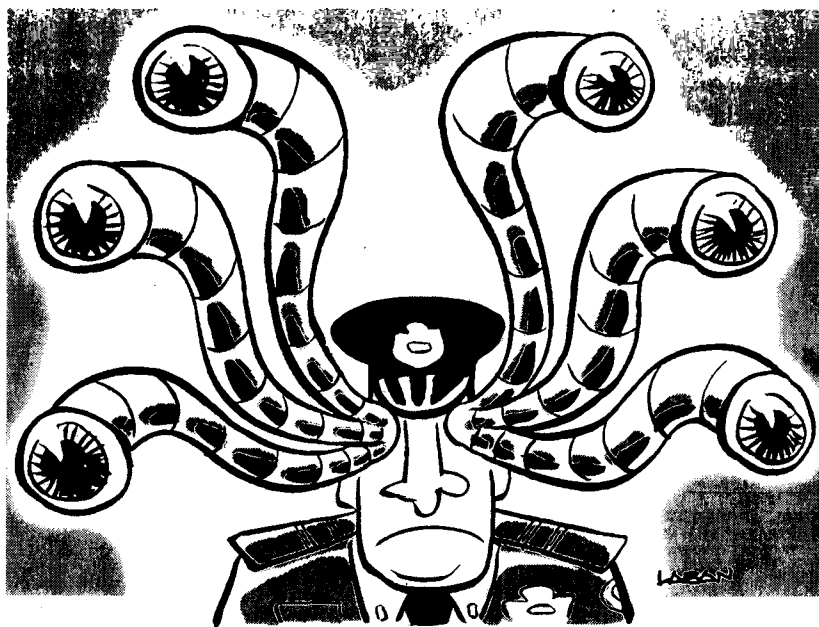
For the last year and a half, Florida's state police have been using Seisint's system to search information at the touch of a keypad: drivers licenses, car registrations, criminal records, child abuse records and corrections records—as well as "publicly available" financial records. Another dozen states, including Georgia, New York and Pennsylvania, will buy into the system, giving police access to all of the other members' records. Several states, including Texas and California, declined to participate, citing concerns about the security of the data being collected and accessed.

The ACLU, alarmed at what it sees as a state end run around congressional de-funding of Poindexter's project, filed freedom of

information requests October 30 for details of Matrix with all participating states

"This is a very scary development," says Barry Steinhardt, director of the ACLU's Technology and Liberty Program. "This Matrix system means you can search information on hundreds of millions of people. Law-abiding Americans are going to pay the price for letting law enforcement troll all their data this way."

Like TIA, Matrix backers say the system is simply another tool in the battle against terror. But it will play little part in that effort, which is largely a federal government job. Rather, Matrix will be used in run-of-the-mill law enforcement.



"I won't lie to you," says Lt. Col. Ralph Periandi, deputy commissioner for operations with the Pennsylvania State Police. "This system is not just being used to investigate terrorism."

Concerns about possible misuse of data were aroused when it was discovered that the designer of the system, Hank Asher, was an unindicted co-conspirator in a \$150-million cocaine smuggling ring. Asher resigned from the Seisint board last August.

Periandi serves as a member of the policy board developing Matrix and says with Asher gone there are no problems. "All of the Seisint people who will have access to the data will be vetted," Periandi says. The system also will include tight controls over access, he continues, and a clear audit trail

to follow in case of misuse.

But what about concerns that the system could lead to a world in which police monitor everyone? In response, Periandi laughs: "I guess it comes down to whether you trust the police or not."

Given the record of police spying and misuse of intelligence data over the recent decades, most recently in Denver and Philadelphia, such a remark is not encouraging. Nor are reports that the Matrix consortium is considering giving access to the data to the CIA, which ordinarily is not supposed to spy on Americans within the United States.

Periandi argues that Matrix doesn't give police new powers or access to additional data. "We can access all this information already," he says. The difference: Getting it today requires making separate searches through individual databases in each of the 50 states. "With Matrix we can do it in 10 minutes," he says.

But the ACLU's Steinhardt replies that this is just the problem. "Before, investigators had to have a reason to track the information on one suspect," he says. "Now they can do data-mining and search for associations among all citizens, based upon certain assumptions."

Periandi provided a perfect example of such assumptions by suggesting that searches could examine how "serial killers tend to use all three of their names, like John Wilkes Booth." But he disavows the term "data-mining." Although it is widely used in modern industry, he says, police authorities prefer the term "database integration."

"I think you'll find that with a project as Orwellian as this, these government agencies will engage in the Orwellian practice of trying to rename things," says Steinhardt. "But whatever you call it, it means the police using Matrix will be able to monitor the activities of all the citizens in their states—and that's frightening." ■

Dave Lindorff is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia.

Health Scare

Medicare privatization debate reaches boiling point

By Kip Sullivan

A crucial debate in Congress on whether to privatize Medicare is rapidly coming to a head. As *In These Times* went to press, Republican congressional leaders had reportedly instructed Republicans on a House-Senate conference committee to decide by November 10 whether to endorse the provisions of a House bill that would privatize Medicare in 2010.

Republicans are under intense pressure to add Medicare drug coverage, however meager, to soften the GOP's image as the party of the rich, and those on the conference committee are being pressured by the right wing to endorse HR 1's privatization provisions.

Democrats have warned, however, that retaining privatization could doom the

bill. On October 23, 41 senators, including one Republican and an independent, warned Bush not to pursue privatization. Democrats have expedient reasons to play hardball: Medicare drug benefits are popular among voters; privatization is not. Republicans could suffer voter retribution in 2004 if they sacrifice drug coverage.

The outcome of this debate will have a long-lasting influence on the entire U.S. health-care system, not just Medicare. Conservatives are acutely aware of this fact. In a June 23 op-ed, *Wall Street Journal* editors warned Republicans not to decouple privatization and drug coverage. If they did, the piece argued, "Republicans will have already spent their one reform carrot of a prescription drug benefit, private Medicare delivery will be discredited, and the baby boomers will start retiring, increasing the constituency against change." Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, lamented to the *New York Times*, "If we don't get this right, we're going to get European-style socialism in this country in order to finance the

exploding costs of this program when the baby boomers retire."

Ryan is talking trash when he says unprivatized Medicare amounts to socialism, but he is right to suggest that the program and the 40 million it insures resembles single-payer systems in which one tax-financed public agency sets limits on how much providers can charge and reimburses doctors and hospitals directly.

The presence of the traditional Medicare model on the American landscape makes it easier for single-payer advocates to explain how a single-payer system for all Americans would work and why it is superior to the private sector's multiple-payer system. Indeed, in the last five years many single-payer advocates have called their proposal "Medicare for all." Losing traditional Medicare would delay creation of a single-payer system here.

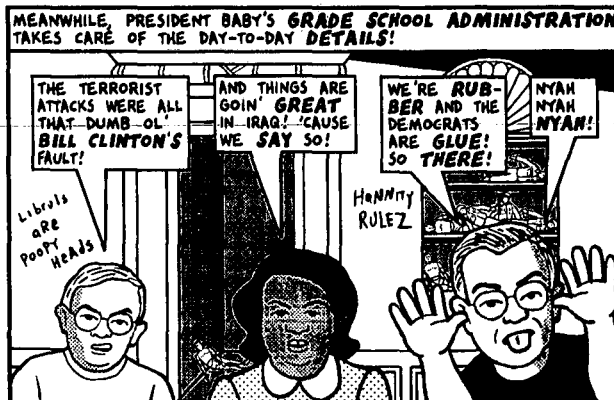
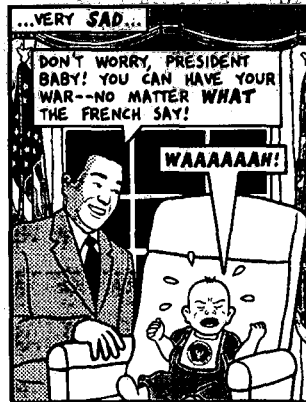
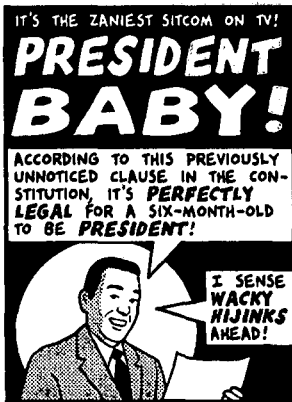
Democrats have done little to promote single-payer but most understand that privatizing Medicare would be a disaster. All evidence indicates that pushing seniors out of Medicare into HMOs would raise, not lower, costs, and would damage quality of care.

HR 1 would achieve privatization in stages by putting great financial pressure on seniors to leave traditional Medicare and enroll in HMOs. Under HR 1, Medicare's guarantee of medical services would be replaced with a voucher that seniors would use to purchase coverage from either the traditional Medicare program (which would have to start charging a premium in 2010) or an HMO. Because sicker seniors would be more likely to stay in traditional Medicare, which neither limits choice of doctor nor interferes in the doctor-patient relation as HMOs do, the Medicare premiums would be higher than those of the HMOs. This would set off a "death spiral": Higher premiums would drive even more disproportionately healthy seniors out of traditional Medicare, Medicare would thereby be forced to charge even higher premiums, and the program eventually would "wither on the vine," in the immortal words of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Rep. William Thomas (R-Calif) chief architect of HR 1, was not exaggerating when he told MSNBC in June that he expected HR 1 to "end Medicare as we know it."

Kip Sullivan has written about and organized for universal health care since 1986.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



No Pepperoni, Please

Tyson workers and community demand more than 'chicken feed'

By Ricky Baldwin

Visitors passing through Wisconsin on their way to Madison or Milwaukee might happen into a dense forest of billboards and yard signs called Jefferson. This farmland town of less than 8,000 is up in arms, fighting off a corporate assault that threatens its existence. And it's not just one town. The corporate giant in this story has taken aim at workers in an entire industry—and by extension hundreds of communities nationwide.

Ground zero is Jefferson's pork processing plant, which produces 65 million pounds of pepperoni a year, more than half the pepperoni used on Pizza Hut and Kraft pizzas. Like other workers in the heavily unionized beef and pork processing industry, and unlike poultry processing workers, generations of employees at the Jefferson plant have enjoyed relatively good wages and benefits—and never had to strike in the plant's 124-year history, until now.

"Tyson is trying to make more money by taking away our wages, taking away affordable health care and taking us away from our children," says Lisa Dehnert, an employee at the Jefferson plant for 16 years and a single mom.

At issue in Jefferson is starting pay, vacation time, health and other benefits, all of which new plant owner Tyson Foods proposes to cut, as well as chopping off the pension in favor of a 401(k) plan heavily invested in Tyson stock, Enron-style.

But workers at dozens of beef and pork processing plants across the country see Jefferson's fight as just the beginning. "We can have the fight now in Jefferson," says one Oscar Mayer employee in Madison, "or down the road at our plant later."

Tyson Foods, by far the largest poultry processor in the world, moved into beef and pork in 2001 with its purchase of IBP Fresh Meats, formerly Iowa Beef Process-

ing. A federal lawsuit had prevented the nation's biggest pork processor, Smithfield Foods, from buying IBP because of antitrust concerns. Tyson had reached its own limit in poultry and quickly swooped down on IBP, including the Jefferson plant. Jefferson workers say they saw the writing on the wall right away.

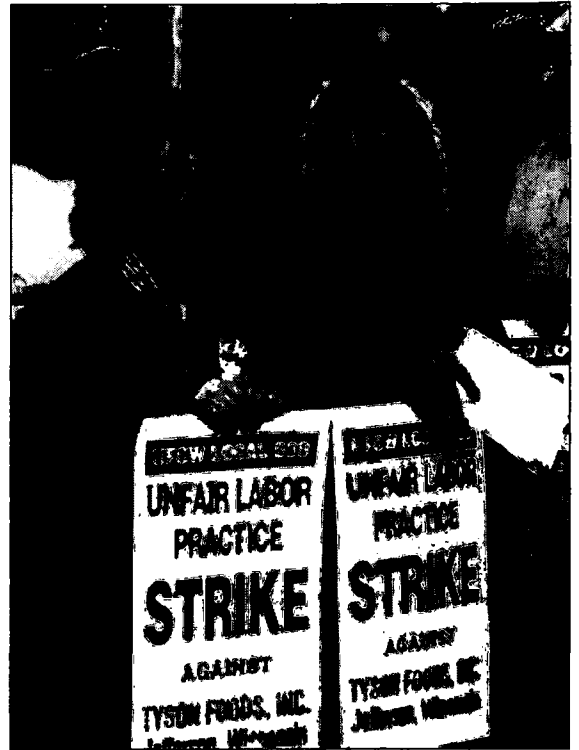
"It was the saddest day of my life," says union president Mike Rice.

The strikers are members of United Food and Commercial Workers, the same union that has fought Tyson elsewhere. They are well aware of Tyson's record of hoarding profits—more than \$2.23 billion last year alone—while workers endure low pay and rising safety violations. In 1999, seven Tyson employees were killed at work, including two who fell into an open pit of decomposing chicken parts and suffocated. The same year in Corydon, Indiana, Tyson employees went on strike after several workers were disciplined for discarding diseased meat.

So when Tyson informed union negotiators in Jefferson last fall that the company planned to bring them into line with their other operations, workers knew they had to fight.

They walked out in February 2003, when their last contract extension expired, calling a national boycott of Tyson-made pepperoni. The community responded immediately. Passersby stopped at the picket line to hand out coffee and donuts. A local pharmacist donated free milk to children of strikers. Local supermarkets pulled Tyson products off the shelves. Nearby city councils and school boards voted to stop buying Tyson products in their cafeterias and lunchrooms.

Nine months later, community support has heightened, and donations are pouring in from all over the United States. Only five of the 470 union members have crossed the picket line. Even a recent funeral in Jefferson became a kind of proxy picket line when the siblings of the deceased, an ardent union activist named Mike Barkley, stood up and announced that they were donating what they would



On September 28, workers' families took part in a protest rally against Tyson Corp.

have spent on their brother at Christmas to the local strike fund.

"People make movies and write books about stuff like this," says union spokesman Dick Knapp.

But what makes a community mobilize like this on behalf of a small group of workers? What makes strangers around the country dig deep to help a little town in Wisconsin? And why would a group of workers endure the hardship—living hand to mouth on donated canned goods, many now without health insurance—over changes that, as the company points out, "primarily affect new hires"?

Partly, the strikers say, it's because a family of four cannot live on \$9 an hour without becoming "a burden on the state." Partly, they say, it's because increasing numbers of workers face a similar threat. But mostly, Knapp says, "It's about community."

For more information, please see www.tysonfamiliesstandup.org. ■

Ricky Baldwin is a longtime labor activist and writer whose articles have appeared in such publications as *Dollars & Sense*, *Extra!* and *Z Magazine*.

Boiling Oil

ChevronTexaco faces Ecuador's courts

By Lou Dematteis and Suzana Sawyer

LAGO AGRIO, ECUADOR—High-level corporate lawyers from ChevronTexaco sat in the same packed muggy courtroom as bare-breasted Amazonian men and women on October 21, the start of what the national media referred to as The Trial of the Century. In this ramshackle Amazonian town, ChevronTexaco stands accused of severely contaminating the surrounding region during 20 years of oil drilling and production in what once was untouched rainforest with pristine rivers and lakes.

At stake is not only whether the San Ramon-based corporate giant will have

to pay more than \$1 billion to clean up pollution left behind by its oil production from 1972 to 1992, but whether the case will bring fundamental change to the way U.S. corporations do business around the world.

The case already has set precedent. It was first filed in the United States in 1993 on behalf of 30,000 plaintiffs in the Ecuadorean Amazon for environmental and health damages but bounced around until a federal appeals court dismissed it nine years later. As part of the dismissal, the court sent the case to Ecuador under the condition that ChevronTexaco abide by the Ecuadorean court's ruling. "The case is historic," said Steven Donziger, a U.S. lawyer representing the Ecuadorean plaintiffs. "This is the first time a U.S. oil company has been forced to submit to jurisdiction in a Latin American court in an environmental case with damages of this magnitude."

No one is denying that the region is polluted—ChevronTexaco even admits to some damage. But the company claims that any damage caused by drilling was "minimal" and "normal for any operation," according to company vice-president and legal counsel Ricardo Reis Vega. The plaintiffs claim that in order to save money, Texaco dumped 18.5 billion gallons of waste into open, unlined pits, instead of the common practice of re-injecting it into the ground. Now the Ecuadoreans want the pits cleaned up.

Reis Vega added that Texaco violated no Ecuadorean environmental laws and that its \$40 million agreement with the government to clean up the pits released the corporation from future liability.

According to Cristobal Bonifaz, lead attorney for the plaintiffs, any cleanup work Texaco claimed to do was either incomplete or not done at all. "Look," says Bonifaz, "we think it is a fraudulent con-

God is Love 10.0

God hates fags. Under this and other catchy slogans the Rev. Fred Phelps and his followers have mounted a crusade against the sin of Sodom. Phelps achieved notoriety in 1998 when he led members of the Westboro Baptist Church in a demonstration at the funeral of Matthew Shepard, the victim of a grisly homophobic murder in Laramie, Wyoming.

Phelps can't seem to get over his obsession with Shepard. According to the Web site 365gay.com, the preacher plans to erect a monument commemorating Shepard's death in the victim's hometown, Casper, Wyoming. The monument will be inscribed with the following message:

Matthew Shepard
Entered Hell October 12, 1998, in
Defiance of God's Warning: "Thou
shalt not lie with mankind as with
womankind; it is abomination."
Leviticus 18:22.

Phelps has announced his intention to place the monument

in City Park in downtown Casper. The park already has a monument to the Ten Commandments, and according to a circuit court ruling the city must give equal space to other political and religious points of view. It remains to be seen whether Phelps' interpretation of the gospel qualifies as such.

Have We Tried Slaughter 4.0

Some days it's tough being a chicken hawk. Your president starts a really expensive foreign war, which seems to oust a second-rate bad guy (though nobody knows for sure). For awhile things go swimmingly. But just as the hard part begins, the commander-in-chief dresses in military drag and declares victory. Then one day it dawns on the public what a bloody mess empire-building is. Soldiers keep dying. The chicken hawk becomes desperate. He wants more action. "Honestly, it's a little tougher than I thought it was going to be," confessed Sen.

Trent Lott of Mississippi, the ex-majority leader, as reported in *The Hill*. But then he showed the stuff he's made of. "If we have to," he added, "we just mow the whole place down, see what happens."

I am a Diva, Too 2.3

When the man who saved Pvt. Jessica Lynch visited her hometown recently, he found the heroine was too busy to greet him. The townsfolk of Palestine, West Virginia did their best to welcome Mohammed al-Rehaief and his family, according to the *Telegraph*, but it was plain to all concerned that Lynch cut him cold.

The *Telegraph* speculates that a rivalry may be to blame. Pvt. Lynch, whose capture and rescue in Iraq thrilled the Amer-

ican public, got a million bucks to write a memoir of the experience. *I Am a Soldier, Too*, as the tome is to be titled, is due in November and will no doubt add new wrinkles to the improbable saga shopped around last summer by U.S. military press agents. Unfortunately for Lynch, her book will share shelf space with al-Rehaief's recently published recollection of the ordeal, *Because Each Life is Precious*, in which the Iraqi describes how he braved bullets to alert the U.S. Army to Lynch's whereabouts.



TERRY LARSEN

tract—fraudulent for the simple reason that the pits were never cleaned up.” Evidence found in an hours-long trip into the countryside seems to support Bonifaz’s assertion. Pipelines snake along oil-slicked roads, and dark pools of oily waste are easy to find. Some of Texaco’s pits are covered with dirt, but digging down a foot or so brings oily deposits gurgling to the surface.

Farmer Benigno Martinez agrees with Bonifaz, who had a Texaco waste pit outside his house near Lago Agrio. “I complained for a long, long time, and six years ago Texaco finally came and covered the pit with dirt. But they didn’t take the oil away,” Martinez says, pointing to oil seeping from the dirt-covered pit and polluting a nearby stream. “I’ve lost eight of my nine horses from drinking the polluted water.” And that’s not the worst part. Hydrocarbon seepage contaminated the household’s water, making his wife, Maria Villasis, chronically ill.

A crowd of hundreds that included members of several Indian tribes, peasants and environmentalists marched to the courthouse the first day of the trial and held a rally on the steps.

The crowd represented an impressive social movement that worked 10 years to transform Ecuador’s laws so they respected citizen rights and protected the environment. Most important is the Law of Environmental Management, passed in 1999. This law offers a process by which citizens can gather as a class and demand that their constitutional right “to live in a clean environment free from contamination” be upheld. The Amazon Defense Front, the indigenous-peasant organization that represents the plaintiffs, is the first to file a suit under this law.

A victory would set precedent. “Bringing a case of this magnitude before the Ecuadorean courts deserves to be watched closely,” says Alejandro Garro, an expert in Latin American law at Columbia University in New York. “If the courts were to determine the existence of liability and the ensuing remedies were to meet standards of fairness expected in a globalized economy, then the ensuing judgment would amount to a real breakthrough.” He added that the plaintiffs would be quick to go the United States to enforce the judgment.

A decision in the case is still a ways off. Testimony for the plaintiffs and the defense



CARLOS VILLALON / GETTY

Flames rise from an uncovered oil pit left by Chevron Texaco when they left the region 13 years ago. Lawsuits are currently underway to determine who should pay for the cleanup.

ended October 29. The judge still must inspect alleged damage and can ask for additional testimony and evidence. Experts predict a verdict in about six months. Expected appeals to the Ecuadorean Superior and Supreme courts could take an additional two or three years.

Any positive judgment likely will come too late for Villasis. Like many in the region, she has been diagnosed with cancer as a result of hydrocarbon exposure. “The doctor says I am totally contaminated. It’s the oil,” she says.

“This case is an attempt to globalize justice,” says Bonifaz. “If justice were globalized, people wouldn’t be so against globalized trade.” The lawyer believes that global justice will be achieved when its standards are raised worldwide. “Protection must come from within,” he says, noting Ecuador’s recently passed Law of Environmental Management. “We want to open the eyes of Latin America and the world to create better tort and environmental law to better deal with problems and provide true justice.”

Bruce Rich, a senior attorney for Environmental Defense, also sees larger implications in the trial. “A victory for the plaintiffs would increase the worldwide perception of potential liability for environmental negligence by multinational corporations. And it will be an incentive for greater environmental and social diligence.”

Already that is the case in Ecuador. As a result of the lawsuit, no oil company is polluting the environment at the rate Texaco is charged.

Bonifaz believes their chances of winning are excellent: “I have total confidence in the transparency of the court and its ability to rise to the occasion. We’re going to win the case.” ■

Writer/photographer Lou Dematteis has published two books: Nicaragua: A Decade of Revolution (Norton, 1991) and A Portrait of Viet Nam (Norton, 1996). Suzana Sawyer is a professor of anthropology at U.C. Davis and author of Crude Chronicles: Conflicts Over Oil Development to be published this spring.

Scandalous Measures

States might lose controls on corporate crooks

By A.C. Thompson and James A. Thompson

The Bush administration is quietly seeking to roll back oversight of the banking business and the scandal-riddled securities market through two pending proposals—a planned rule change for the banking industry and a house bill—that diminish the ability of states to police banks and stock brokers.

The plans are worrisome because the federal government has been largely MIA when it comes to cracking down on corporate crooks in the post-Enron era. While the feds have grabbed headlines with a few high-profile indictments, state law enforcers—most notably New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer—are taking a far more active role in purging Wall Street of con artists and thieves.

Formulated by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, the shakeup would nullify state banking laws stricter than federal regulations. Headed by John D. Hawke, Jr., a K-Street player who's worked for Democrats and Republicans, the OCC is a little-known regulatory backwater but it wields a vast amount of power over the nation's financial institutions.

According to a notice in the *Federal Register* the new rules could wipe out state civil and criminal statutes covering lending, deposit-taking, credit cards, checking accounts, escrow accounts and "all [other] powers authorized" by federal law.

In early October, officials from numerous states issued a stream of scathing critiques of the proposed rule changes.

"This sweeping proposal would preempt virtually all state banking laws for national banks and their operating subsidiaries, essentially undermining the integrity of the recognized dual banking system," wrote Thomas Curry, Massachusetts Commissioner of Banks, in a letter to the OCC.

The plan, Curry noted, would keep states from licensing or investigating local subsidiaries of national banks or from

monitoring "finance companies, securities firms, mortgage lenders and brokers and collection agencies." He says Massachusetts has secured \$5.8 million in restitution for ripped-off consumers during the past two years.

State stock market cops fear the new regulations will curtail their work. "We think it could shield securities firms owned by banks from state regulation," said Bob Webster, a spokesman for the Washington, D.C.-based North American Securities Administrators Association, which represents state securities regulators.

Webster and company are calling for more public input into the rulemaking process—an echo of the recent battle over media ownership at the Federal Communications Commission.

"Given the whole climate of corporate scandal, we think it's time to strengthen, not weaken, investor protections," he said. "We're the early warning system. Investors naturally turn to their state officials for help before they call on Washington."

The ongoing probe of possible fraud in the mutual fund market, Webster pointed out, originated with New York Attorney General Spitzer. Spitzer also orchestrated a "global settlement" between a dozen states and 10 prominent investment banks accused of feeding bogus information to mom-and-pop investors. In April, the banks paid \$1.4 billion—a new record—and agreed to a host of reforms to make the case go away.

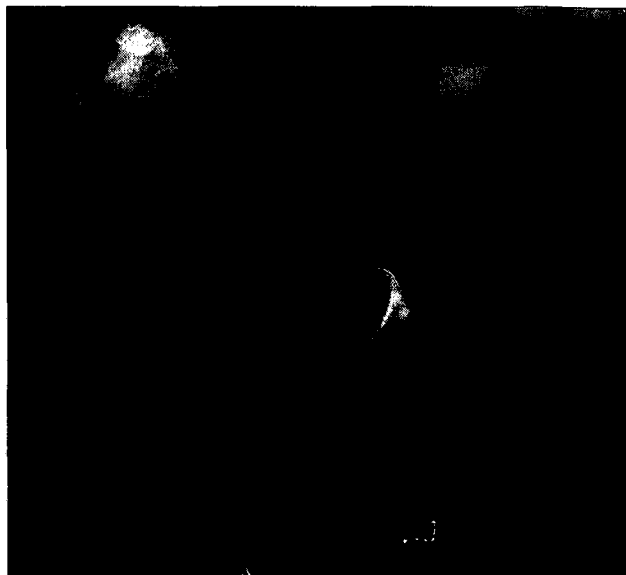
On the West Coast, California Corporations Commissioner Demetrios Boutris—who recently won a \$6.5 million judgment against deceptive stock peddlers—also is annoyed by the OCC plan. In a previously unpublished October 6 letter obtained by *In These Times*, the commissioner challenged the proposal, saying the OCC "lacks the necessary Congressional authority" to overrule certain state laws.

At the OCC, spokesman Kevin Mukri played down the controversy. He portrays the whole effort as a simple attempt to untangle a mess of overlapping and con-

tradictory state and federal statutes.

"Our banks operate in 50 states and you have 50 states passing consumer protection laws, some very stringent, some not," Mukri told *In These Times*. "This creates a uniform field. ... It's kind of like a house-cleaning rule."

Asked about criticisms leveled by the states, he replied, "they're entitled to their opinions," and pointed out that the proposal is backed by banking industry trade groups.



New York State General Attorney Eliot Spitzer.

Mukri said his office has received more than 1,000 comments on the issue but has set no timeline for putting the rules into place.

The banking proposal looks suspiciously like another Bush administration scheme: HR 2179, a House bill introduced this session by Rep. Richard Baker (R-La.) and supported by Rep. Michael Oxley, (R-Ohio), Bush's point man on corporate crime. The pending legislation is supposed to beef up the anemic and long-underfunded Securities Exchange Commission. But it, too, would curb the power of states to combat stock market scams.

HR 2179, which is currently idling but could be revived, has drawn howls from state authorities and consumer advocates, with Spitzer labeling it "an absolute, outright betrayal of the small investor." ■

A.C. Thompson is a staff reporter with the San Francisco Bay Guardian. Freelance writer James A. Thompson lives in Tucson, Arizona.

Wall Street Windfall

By Craig Aaron

Democrats are hoping to make one word synonymous with Bush administration policy in Iraq, and judging by the generally reliable political barometer of late-night comedy writers, their strategy may be working. "President Bush is asking Congress for \$80 billion to help rebuild Iraq," David Letterman quipped in a September monologue. "And when you make out that check, remember there are two Ls in Halliburton."

A big fuss has been made—and rightly so—about the multibillion-dollar, no-bid contracts handed out to a subsidiary of Dick Cheney's old firm. The most comprehensive study to date, released in late October by the Center for Public Integrity, identifies 71 companies and individuals who received a total of \$8 billion worth of contracts in postwar Afghanistan and Iraq. These same interests have contributed more money to George W. Bush than to any other federal candidate since 1990.

But the truly surprising thing about the report wasn't how much these companies gave to Bush, but how little. Combined they gave Bush \$500,000, an average of just \$7,000 each. That's hardly enough to get a table at a Bush fund-raiser, let alone establish a quid pro quo.

This is not to say that companies don't make campaign contributions to influence policy and seek out special favors. Or that these firms didn't benefit from cronyism and insider access. Some companies—especially military-industrial contractors—have more effective and efficient ways of securing government business. These include keeping the vice president on the company payroll. Halliburton has paid Cheney hundreds of thousands of dollars in deferred salary since he took office.

Industries without such close ties must demonstrate their loyalty in other ways. The financial services industry is a good example. Initially, Wall Street—which tends to hedge its bets by giving equally to both parties—had little access to the Bush administration. No Wall Street CEOs were invited to Bush's business leaders forum held a few weeks before his inauguration, and none participated in

his August 2002 economic summit.

But times have changed. Since June, Wall Street has given the Bush campaign \$3.8 million, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. Merrill Lynch, Bush's top contributor, has given as much as all 71 postwar contractors combined. At least a dozen top Wall Street executives have joined the ranks of Bush's "Rangers" and "Pioneers" by bundling hundreds of



thousands of dollars in campaign contributions. (Only one of these rainmakers was ranked among Bush's top fund-raisers in 2000.) Shortly after Bush's September speech to the United Nations, the president met behind closed doors with a small group of top Wall Street execs.

There's a chicken-and-egg debate over whether contributions influence policy or policy influences contributions—but it works both ways. The investment community's outpouring of support stems largely from the Bush administration's tax policies, which slashed dividend and capital gains tax rates. Wall Street led the fight for Bush's plan, which the Securities Industry Association declared to be "the number one issue on our advocacy agenda." These cuts not only benefited the industry's richest customers—Wall Street CEOs stood to personally save millions.

There's a lot more on the industry's legislative and regulatory wish list. But to accomplish any of it, Wall Street must first shake off the taint of corporate scandal. Apparently, their strategy has nothing to do with reforming the practices that have bilked investors out of billions. Instead, Wall Street is whining about being overregulated. Merrill Lynch CEO Stan O'Neal, a Ranger, wrote an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* last spring warning, "If we attempt to eliminate risk—to legislate,

regulate or litigate it out of existence—the ultimate result will be economic stagnation, perhaps even economic failure."

O'Neal's article was a thinly veiled attack on New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer—who launched the investigation that led to a \$1.4 billion "global settlement" by Merrill Lynch and nine other big Wall Street firms over allegations of fraudulent conflicts of interest between investment bankers and stock analysts. Executives from seven of those firms are now Rangers or Pioneers.

U.S. Rep. Richard Baker (R-La.) introduced a bill last summer to prevent state regulators like Spitzer from forcing structural changes in the securities industry, an idea shopped around the Hill a year earlier by Morgan Stanley. Morgan Stanley is not only Baker's biggest campaign contributor, but the firm's managing director has become a Ranger. The bill—endorsed by the chairman of the SEC—was shelved after attracting too much negative press. But it is sure to resurface.

Since then, Spitzer has further humiliated Wall Street—and the lapdogs at the SEC—by going after hedge and mutual funds for fraudulent trading practices. In the latter case, firms allegedly allowed select wealthy investors "to bet today on yesterday's horse races," as Spitzer put it. The industry's calls to muzzle him have only intensified.

Despite the president's pledge after the collapse of Worldcom "to usher in a new era of integrity in corporate America," Wall Street knows a good investment when it sees one. Bush's tax cuts are just the first step in a push toward making all investment income tax-free. Wall Street hopes to deter further regulation of hedge funds, derivatives trading and arcane, highly profitable tax-avoidance schemes. The industry also aims to remodel the retirement and pension systems, limit class-action lawsuits and privatize Social Security.

The handouts to investment bankers and their wealthy clients during a second Bush administration won't be as easily quantifiable as the postwar contracts. But the Democratic presidential contenders—and the rest of us—would be wise to remember that there also are two Ls in Merrill Lynch. ■

Post-Feminist Swill Redux

By Susan Douglas

There it sat on the dining room table exuding kryptonite: the Sunday *New York Times Magazine* with the cover headline: "Q: Why Don't More Women Get to the Top? A: They Choose Not To." The subtitle read, "Abandoning the Climb and Heading Home." An angelic white Madonna in her Ann Taylor outfit with what appeared to be the Hope diamond on one finger, several selections from Tiffany's bracelet department on her wrist, and a toddler in her lap represented all these American mothers who are "heading home." I feared the worst—yet another post-feminist piece of swill about how mothers can't hack it at work and would much rather play Chutes and Ladders all day. I was not to be disappointed.

Since the late '80s and the debut of "the mommy track," we have been subjected to these stories about mothers seeing the light and chucking it all for junior. The format is almost always the same. Five women who went to Yale and, say, the Harvard Business School, married to men whose salaries equal the operating budget of Wal-Mart, decide to have kids and then quit their jobs and—poof—there is a national "movement" of mothers not only rejecting the workplace, but feminism as well. This article, written by Lisa Belkin (a former *Times* reporter who decided to quit and write freelance because her husband could easily support them), follows the template perfectly. Only here the privileged white women we meet from the "Opt-Out Revolution" are Princeton alums (as is Belkin) or from other elite universities who then went to work in law firms or newsrooms.

This post-feminist drumbeat is a slap at mothers who do work for a living, because they need to, want to, or both. It is also, of course, an assault on feminism as misguided, irrelevant, out-of-date, or all the above. As one of the mothers tells Belkin, "I don't want to take on the mantle of all womanhood and fight a fight for some sister who isn't really my sister because I don't even know her." Ouch. Well, as a feminist throwback to the days of "sisterhood is powerful," I do think that all mothers must debunk these stories each and every time they appear, for ourselves

and for each other. We mothers, whether we work outside the home or not, must say "Excuuuse me" to such alleged "trend reports" that pit working mothers against stay-at-home mothers and undermine mothers who work. So let's begin.

Excuse me #1: Class bias, race bias, need we say more? In fact, at one point Belkin notes that 95 percent of white men with MBAs are working but only 67 percent of



white women with MBAs are. But she adds (parenthetically, no less) that the numbers for African-American women are closer to those of white men. Doesn't this make you a tad suspicious about the whole notion of "choice?"

Excuse me #2: The discourse of "choice." Despite the headlines, what we learn inside the article is that the first two women we meet, one an attorney, the other a television reporter, were confronted with speed-up at work—55- to 75-hour weeks—at the same time they were having children. Both asked for shorter and more flexible hours and were turned down. Their "choice" was to maintain their punishing schedules or to quit. I am sorry, but this is not a choice. As one of these women admits, "I wish it had been possible to be the kind of parent I want to be and continue with my legal career." The cover headline totally misrepresents this woman's dilemma.

Excuse me #3: Selective use of statistics. The article emphasizes findings from a recent survey in which 26 percent of women in senior management said they did not want a promotion. So that means nearly three-quarters did. And how does that compare to men, many of whom don't want high-stress jobs either? We

then learn that *Fortune* reported that out of 108 women in high-powered jobs, "at least 20" have chosen to leave. Maybe I'm dumb at math, but doesn't that mean that four-fifths have not made this "choice?"

Excuse me #4: Biology is destiny. Whenever you need to keep women in their place, it's always good to cite examples from the animal kingdom. Belkin uses baboon analogies. She makes the usual disclaimer about the misuse of biology, and then goes on to tell us that we mothers (but not dads?) are genetically driven to protect our kids and "seeking clout in a male world does not correlate with child well-being." You mean earning a decent salary does not correlate with being able to take care of your kids?

Excuse me #5: Buried lead. The real story here is not about mothers "choosing" not to work. It's about the ongoing inhumanity of many workplaces whose workaholic cultures are hostile to men and women. Americans work anywhere from six to nine weeks a year longer than most Europeans. And many "high powered" jobs like corporate attorney are lethally

When the real story is capitalism run amok, it's commonplace to turn it into a story about the failure of feminists.

boring and stressful to both genders.

But, you know, when the real story is about capitalism run amok, it's commonplace to turn it into a story about a human failing, in this case the failure of feminists. So let's be clear about who has really failed mothers, including the privileged ones in this article. First, Congress and successive presidential administrations. For decades, the federal government has refused to provide a quality national day-care system, decent maternity and paternity leaves, or after-school programs. Second, much, though not all, of corporate America and the preposterous workaholic culture it fosters.

Mothers of America, it's time to talk back and refute insulting post-feminist propaganda. ■

Worthy of the Land of Lincoln

By Salim Muwakkil

Barack Obama has emerged out of Chicago's boisterous mix of black and progressive politics as a candidate who just may make history as the nation's third elected black U.S. senator. He's an attractive political candidate: well educated and articulate with a history of commitment. He's also an exotic candidate.

First of all, there's his name. The 41-year-old Obama is the son of a black Kenyan father and a white Kansas mother. Obama was born in Hawaii, where he was raised by his mother and her family, and spent his formative years in many unexpected locations. He also lived for a time in Indonesia.

He's a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School, where he graduated magna cum laude and became the first black American president of the Harvard Law Review. From there he settled in Chicago, where he directed a voter registration and education project in Cook County instead of joining one of the many corporate law firms that were beckoning. Obama also began reconciling his hybrid heritage with American realities and found a sense of belonging within the city's African-American community.

We know so much about Obama's inner struggles because he wrote a 1995 book about them titled *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. The book is a lyrical meditation on race, culture and issues of hybridity. In 1993, he joined a law firm, but it specialized in civil rights and voting rights litigation. And in that capacity he served as general counsel to community health clinics and social service agencies throughout Chicago. He also lectures on constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School.

Throughout his life, his name and hybrid identity provided a convenient target for detractors; they still do. A recent Web site, constructed by a Republican political operative, compared Obama to Osama bin Laden. The site was shut down. Letters to conservative publications in Illinois regularly refer to Obama as a radical Muslim, although he

has been an active member of a large South Side Methodist congregation for many years.

But it's not just conservative whites who find Obama troublesome. Chicago's substantial Black Nationalist community also has problems with him. This discomfort stems from a perpetual dynamic within progressive Chicago politics that finds the city's Black Nationalist activists



and theorists often in opposition to integrated activists.

Harold Washington was such a pivotal figure because he was able to fuse the interests of Chicago's influential nationalists with the city's progressives. The inability to forge such a coalition since Washington's death is the primary reason Richard J. Daley has won every election.

Although some nationalists distrust Obama for his close links to progressive political operatives, he still has one of the best opportunities, post-Harold, to cultivate and strengthen those nationalist-progressive links. Within the Black Nationalist community some are now urging all-out support for Obama. In addition to lauding his legislative record during his seven years as senator from Illinois' 13th District, they argue that it's perverse for black nationalists to reject the son of a Kenyan for not being black enough.

He has notched several legislative victories during his tenure in the Illinois Senate, including sponsoring a racial profiling law that requires police departments to record the race of stopped motorists and also sponsoring a law requiring that interrogations and confessions in capital crime cases be videotaped.

In addition, Obama co-sponsored a bill to raise the minimum wage and he was instrumental in expanding Kid Care and Family Care, the children and family health insurance program in Illinois. And he was the first senate candidate to forcefully oppose the Bush administration's Iraq invasion and has been in the forefront of continuing opposition.

Many of the state's more progressive unions and the public interest group Citizen Action have endorsed him. Along with endorsements from U.S. Reps. Danny Davis, Jesse Jackson Jr. and Lane Evans, Obama won the support of liberal icons Abner Mikva, former chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals and former White House counsel, and Newton Minow, former Federal Communication Commission chairman. He's also been endorsed by the Rev. Jesse Jackson and former U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley, (D-N.J.).

Steve Neal, dean of Chicago's political columnists, called Obama "the most intelligent and articulate contender in a surprisingly strong Democratic field." So

Obama's candidacy is likely to ignite a progressive firestorm. It better.

far, nine Democratic candidates are running in the primary for the vacated Senate seat of Republican Peter Fitzgerald. Seven Republicans are running in the March 2004 primary. "It is said that Illinois is represented by lightweights in the Senate," Neal wrote. "Obama would be a Senator worthy of the land of Lincoln."

Most serious political observers of Illinois politics share Neal's assessment. "The general reaction to Obama is that he would probably be a great U.S. senator, but that his foreign-sounding name and his race hurt his chances," chimed in Rich Miller, a columnist for the *Daily Southtown*, a suburban publication.

The best candidate for the U.S. Senate from Illinois also happens to be the most progressive. He also happens to be black. This is a convergence so rare it's likely to ignite a progressive firestorm. It better. ■

THE FIRST

By Joel Bleifuss

The South Rises Again

Haley Barbour, the just-elected governor of Mississippi and the former chairman of the Republican National Committee, accepted many endorsements in his recent campaign. George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Bob Dole, Rudolph Giuliani, and Florida Gov. Jeb Bush all visited the state to lend their support to Barbour. He also got some down-home help from the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), a St. Louis-based white supremacist group at whose gatherings Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) has spoken.

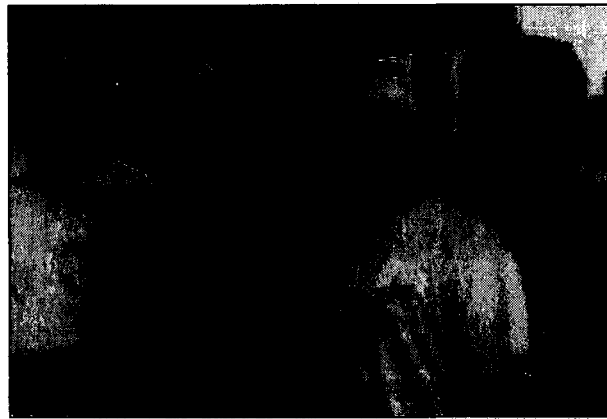
Up until November 5, the homepage of the CCC website (www.cofcc.org) featured a photograph of Barbour at an annual barbecue sponsored by the group's Mississippi chapter to raise money for school buses to take white kids to Christian schools. Despite demands during the campaign that he disaffiliate with Mississippi's unreconstructed racists, Barbour refused to ask the CCC to remove the photo, which pictures him with CCC Field Director Bill Lord.

In addition to highlighting the Barbour photo, the CCC Web site explains that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is in fact a compilation of "lectures addressed to Jewish Luciferians" that detail "an incredible plan to overthrow western civilization, subjugate mankind, and concentrate 'all the wealth of the world in our hands.'"

The CCC also frets about the feminist threat: "With thanks to liberal Jews like Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan, [American women] have become foreigners in their own land. Welcome to Amazon America, 'where we celebrate the castrat-

ing of the dreaded White male daily.'"

And the CCC features a proposal that parcels out the United States among the races in what it calls "The Racial Compact" (www.racialcompact.com/partitionmap.html). Racial separation is needed to protect the genetic integrity of the "Nordish" race (those of northern European ancestry). Not convinced? The article explains, "To describe the situation in biological terms, the habitat of the Nordish race is being invaded by competing life-forms or races." In this partition



Haley Barbour, middle left, posing in July with white supremacist leader Bill Lord, right.

scheme, the "Latin Amerindians" (Latinos) would be relegated to southern Texas and New Mexico. "Congoids" (African Americans) would get Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and North Texas. Other human "subspecies" would be settled along the Mexican border and in Southern Florida as a racial barrier. The "Nordish-American" race would reside in the rest of the country. The CCC does not spell out where it would put the "extra-territorial non-indigenous European ethnic groups" (Jews and Gypsies). Perhaps it has other plans for them.

Controversy about racist statements is nothing new to Barbour. In 1982, when he was unsuccessfully running for the U.S. Senate, the *New York Times* reported:

The racial sensitivity at Barbour headquarters was suggested by an exchange between the candidate and an aide who complained that there would be 'coons' at a campaign stop at the state fair. Embarrassed that a reporter heard this,

Mr. Barbour warned that if the aide persisted in racist remarks, he would be reincarnated as a watermelon and placed at the mercy of blacks.

A Brand New World's in Birth

The Socialist International is the global organization of the world's diverse 141 socialist, social democratic and labor parties (www.socialistinternational.org). The most influential of these parties are currently governing, among other places, Germany, the United Kingdom and Portugal. Others members, like the Democratic Socialists of America, try to maintain a socialist leaven in the Democratic Party politic.

In late October, the XXII Congress of the Socialist International gathered in Sao Paulo, Brazil—the first time in Latin America—at the invitation of Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva. Lula's Workers Party has not joined the Socialist International, which some Workers Party members consider too moderate, though negotiations between the two organizations are now under way.

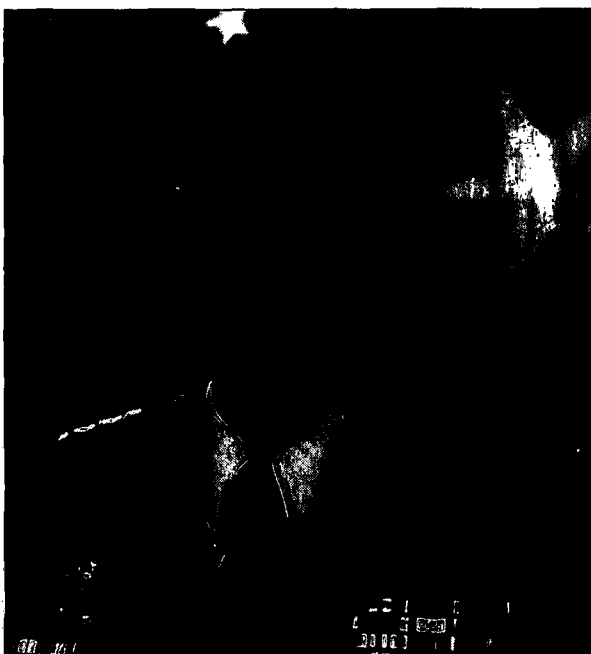
Nicaragua's socialists, however, are members. And the Nicaraguan delegation, which included former Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, unsuccessfully tried to get

the British Labour Party expelled for Tony Blair's support for the war in Iraq. The war was a topic on delegates' minds. In his address to the congress, Lula said, "The only war we should be waging is against hunger and inequality. That's a war worth fighting."

Congress delegates issued the "Declaration of Sao Paulo." This 2,700-word manifesto eschews the word "socialist" for "progressive." The lexicon may have changed since the Socialist International was founded in 1889, but a new internationalism similar to that which motivated 19th Century socialists has taken hold.

The "Declaration of Sao Paulo" warns that "neoconservatives are attempting ... to dismantle all forms of global governance, to minimize the role of the United Nations, to undermine multilateral institutions, to promote unilateralism and the consecration of the market and to impose the will of the powerful to decide the future of mankind." To counter this threat, the Congress issued the following call to action:

The Socialist International ... calls on all socially and politically progressive people and organizations to come together in a global coalition to promote a new world order based on a new multilateralism for peace, security, sustainable development, social justice, democracy, respect for human rights and gender equality. ... The International is steadfastly working to mobilize all the world's progressives ... to establish an effective system of multilateral governance, based on the rule of law and a more balanced, more just architecture of international relations, with a reformed and modernized United Nations as its cornerstone.



Lt. Gen. William G. Boykin is gunning for the devil.

God Save Us

Lt. Gen. William G. Boykin, recently named deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence, is an evangelical Christian who has said Muslim terrorists are "after us because we're a Christian nation." But the real enemy, says Boykin, is not Muslim per se, but the devil working through them. "The enemy is a spiritual enemy," Boykin says. "He's called the principality of darkness. The enemy is a guy called Satan."

In response to the resulting furor, the Pentagon had Boykin issue an apology. However the Pentagon PR people edited out the general's oft-repeated assertion that "George Bush was placed in the White House by God."

"Why is this man in the White House?" Boykin asked at one of his many church appearances. "The majority of Americans did not vote for him. Why is he there? And I tell you this morning that he's in the White House because God put him there for a time such as this."

Was God behind those hanging chads? In an open letter to Boykin, Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners*, writes:

General, I really don't want to blame you for the lack of Christian teaching that you have obviously suffered. ... When a high-ranking military officer espouses a zealous religious nationalism

that claims the name "Christian" for both his nation and his army, and when he invokes the name of Jesus—not to love our enemies as he instructed, but rather to target them for destruction—the church must discipline that errant brother and name his public statements for what they are, not mere political incorrectness, but idolatry. General, you have substituted your nation and your army for God, your faith is more American than Christian, the Jesus you claim is not the Jesus of the New Testament, and his kingdom will not be ushered in by the U.S. military.

The Fox in the News Room

Charlie Reina is a six-year veteran of Fox News. In a letter he wrote to Poynter's Web columnist Jim Romenesko, Reina describes what it was like working for Fox News Chairman Roger "Willie Horton" Ailes.

"The roots of Fox News Channel's day-to-day bias are actual and

direct. They come in the form of an executive memo distributed electronically each morning, addressing what stories will be covered and, often, suggesting how they should be covered," writes Reina. "If, on any given day, you notice that the Fox anchors seem to be trying to drive a particular point home, you can bet The Memo is behind it."

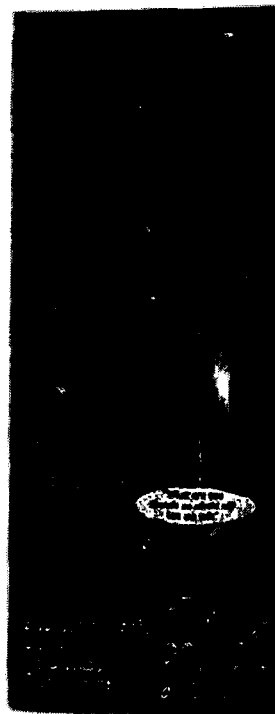
For example, the March 20 memo, informed newsroom personnel:

There is something utterly incomprehensible about Kofi Annan's remarks in which he allows that his thoughts are "with the Iraqi people." One could ask where those thoughts were during the 23 years Saddam Hussein was brutalizing those same Iraqis. Food for thought.

In an interview, Reina told the *Los Angeles Times*' Tim Ruttin: "Fox doesn't 'seem' conservative and Republican. It is conservative and Republican." And he had this take on Fox News' young staff: "Many of them wanted to be on television but not necessarily in news. They haven't had the benefit of traditional journalist training, so they're easily molded. Time after time, I watched what management's politics did to the young anchors. As they near the time to get their own show, the hair gets blonder and the bias gets clearer."

Blonder and Scarier

Skinny, blond and mini-skirted, she can be yours for \$29.95—the Ann Coulter Action Figure, that is. Press her button. "Why not go to war just for oil?" asks the Coulter talking doll being sold by www.talkingpresidents.com. The company markets Coulter as "a blond haired beauty with the brains and backbone to send the staunchest Liberal running for the hills." Another of Talking Coulter's 14 witticisms: "Liberals hate America. They hate flag wavers." Not included in the doll's repertoire are remarks Coulter made describing NBC's Katie Couric as "the affable Eva Braun of morning television," or Tipper Gore as "gaudy white trash." ■



Autism in a Needle?

The Toxic Tale of Vaccinations and Mercury Poisoning

By Annette Fuentes

Lyn Redwood's son Will was a healthy, happy baby who met all the normal developmental standards—he was walking and talking by one year.

About three months later, however, he began to regress, losing speech, avoiding eye contact and appearing miserable. "He didn't seem happy anymore," Redwood said in a recent interview. "He just wanted to sit in his infant seat and watch videos over and over again."

Doctors initially blamed hearing problems for Will's decline. Neurologists told the parents that their son had global and receptive speech delay. At age 5, the boy was diagnosed as autistic by his school.



Lyn Redwood
and her son Will.

Seeking answers to her son's condition, Redwood turned to the Internet in 1999 and began a search that led to startling discoveries about thimerosal. This vaccine preservative is composed of nearly 50 percent mercury, which is a known neurotoxin especially harmful to fetuses, infants and children. What's more, it has been linked to a range of symptoms collectively known as Autism Spectrum Disorders. At one end is severe autism, in which children are socially withdrawn, do not speak and exhibit bizarre, repetitive, sometimes aggressive behaviors. At the other end are Asperger's Syndrome, a high-functioning form of autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Thimerosal was widely used since the '40s in over-the-counter medicines until that use was banned in 1998. It's still found in some vaccines for adults and infants. Its medical, political, economic and international implications represent a chilling chapter in the history of public health, in which regulatory agencies were negligent, if not guilty, in covering up health hazards, by

FDA had called for the removal of all thimerosal-containing products from over-the-counter products. Thimerosal remained in more than 50 vaccines, however, until the Public Health Service (which includes the FDA, the CDC and the National Institutes of Health) and the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement in July 1999 "urging" vaccine makers to reduce or eliminate thimerosal because of "theoretical potential for neurotoxicity."

Last year, the staff for Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ill.) obtained an internal e-mail written June 29, 1999, by former FDA scientist Peter Patriarca. In that e-mail Patriarca offered his colleagues a "pros and cons" assessment of the thimerosal statement shortly before its release:

Will raise questions about FDA being 'asleep at the switch' for decades, by allowing a potentially hazardous compound to remain in many childhood vaccines, and not forcing manufacturers to exclude it from new products. Will also raise questions about various advisory bodies about aggressive recommendations for use. We must keep in mind that the dose of ethyl mercury was not generated by 'rocket science': conversion of the % of thimerosal

Before 1980, autism was diagnosed in 1 in 10,000 children; in 2002, the National Institutes of Health raised that figure to 1 in 250 children.

failing to act quickly to protect millions of children. Said Redwood, a nurse practitioner and a board of health member in her Georgia county, where vaccination is a major public health program: "If someone had told me prior to 1999 that vaccines were responsible for my son's disabilities, I would have thought they were crazy."

Regulators 'asleep at the switch'

Before 1980, autism was diagnosed in 1 in 10,000 children; in 2002, the National Institutes of Health raised that figure to 1 in 250 children. The Autism Society of America now estimates that autism disorders are growing by 10 percent or more annually. Some scientists believe boys are afflicted by the neurological disorders of autism at a rate three to six times that of girls because the female hormone estrogen protects against mercury toxicity.

In a sad twist, scientists increasingly believe that the mercury-laced vaccines meant to protect children from illness are at the root of this spike. In 1985, four of the shots recommended for infants in their first 18 months contained thimerosal. By 1991, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) added three Hepatitis B shots (each containing 12.5 micrograms of thimerosal) and four Hib shots (each with 25 micrograms of mercury). As a result, the number of vaccines containing thimerosal jumped to 11, and the amount of mercury exposure mushroomed to 237.5 micrograms, an amount that exceeded all federal limits.

Neither the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) nor the CDC, the nation's chief regulatory agencies for pharmaceutical products and the watchdogs of public health, added up the micrograms. The regulatory spotlight was finally fixed on thimerosal in 1997 when Congress passed the FDA Modernization Act. Part of the act required the FDA to investigate all drugs that contained mercury and determine their effects on humans. Within a year, the

to actual ug [micrograms] of mercury involves 9th grade algebra. What took the FDA so long to do the calculations? Why didn't CDC and the advisory bodies do these calculations while rapidly expanding the childhood immunization schedule?

Roger Bernier, of the CDC's national immunization program, received the e-mail. In a recent interview he explained why the cumulative amount of mercury was never figured. "Vaccines tend to be evaluated on an individual basis, the requirements for safety and efficacy on an individual basis," Bernier said. "This holistic view of safety was not part of the review." Bernier said the health agencies did not order vaccine makers to stop using thimerosal and to recall existing vaccines containing it because "this was a theoretical concern, it was conceived as precautionary measure, not because evidence showed a risk. There wasn't a sense of urgency. It was viewed as something to be done—not because we had to, but because it should be done."

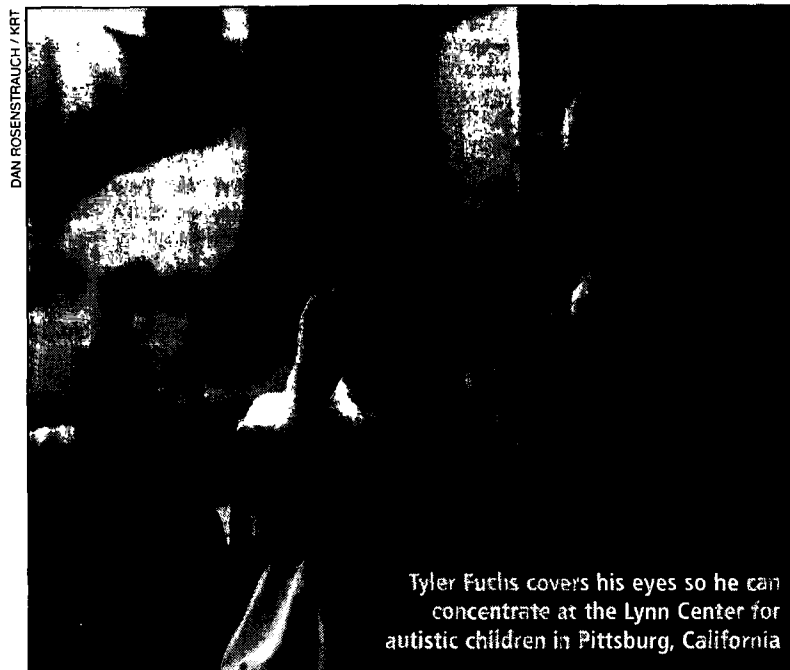
Toxicity and plausibility

While the FDA and CDC moved glacially slow on mercury, the EPA had been since the early '70s aggressively educating the public about ingesting mercury in food, especially fish, and setting standards for exposure. The inconsistent approach to mercury is reflected in the standards agencies set for maximum daily consumption. Set in micrograms per kilogram of body weight, the EPA's standard is lowest, at .1 micrograms, the FDA's is .4 micrograms. Those guidelines are for methylmercury, the toxic cousin of ethylmercury, which is in thimerosal. While some government scientists defending the use of thimerosal have argued that ethyl is less toxic than methyl, both forms will harm living tissue, according to Boyd Haley, chair of the department of chemistry at the University of Kentucky and an expert on toxic

metals. "Some parents of autistic children called me and asked me to look at thimerosal. We did some experiments with human brain tissue and it was dramatic," Haley said. "It penetrates the proteins in the brain. It is toxic to neurons and enzymes." Haley co-authored an August 2003 study that showed autistic children retained more mercury in their bodies than normal children,

Verstraeten's first report in February 2000 found a statistically significant risk for neurological developmental disorders at age 3 months as the amount of thimerosal that babies received increased. And he found a risk of autism 2.48 times greater for infants getting higher amounts of thimerosal in vaccines, compared to infants who received thimerosal-free vaccines. A June 2000 analysis by Verstraeten found a link between thimerosal and language, speech and developmental delays during the child's first 6 months. Verstraeten's initial findings were never publicly released, and SAFE MINDS obtained copies of his reports only through Freedom of Information Act filings in 2001. For Robert Krakow, whose son is autistic, Verstraeten's findings were a bittersweet discovery. "If the Verstraeten report had been publicized, my wife would have read about it because she was up on these things and our son wouldn't have had thimerosal-containing vaccines," he said. "Why is the public not told? To protect the vaccine makers." Verstraeten left the CDC shortly after his presentation to work for vaccine maker GlaxoSmithKline in Belgium. He declined to comment for this article, citing "ongoing litigation in the U.S. regarding thimerosal."

The thimerosal issue continues to reverberate in the scientific and public health community. The Institute of Medicine (IOM), an advisory body created by the National Academies of Science, convened in fall 2001 to assess thimerosal's potential to cause autism and other neurological problems in children. The IOM's statement, after assessing Verstraeten's research and hearing testimony of scientists such as Haley and others linking autism and



Tyler Fuchis covers his eyes so he can concentrate at the Lynn Center for autistic children in Pittsburg, California

Eli Lilly, inventor of thimerosal, was granted protection from lawsuits by parents of autistic children under a short-lived provision slipped into the Homeland Security Act in November 2002.

evidenced by higher levels of the toxin in their hair. That means the ethylmercury from thimerosal had been absorbed into their brain and other body tissue, likely causing neurological damage.

The July 1999 statement on thimerosal hardly put the issue to rest. For Redwood, it was the catalyst that led to the creation of SAFE MINDS, a parents' group that has conducted research on the thimerosal-autism disorders link. With several other parents of autistic children, in 2001 Redwood published "Autism: A Novel Form of Mercury Poisoning" in the journal *Medical Hypotheses*. Their study showed that the symptoms of mercury poisoning mirrored those of autism and concluded that early exposure to mercury from thimerosal had caused many cases of autism, while genetic and environmental factors made some children more vulnerable than others. "Once we got the paper together, we contacted the NIH, CDC and FDA," Redwood said. "We got mixed responses. We petitioned the FDA on three occasions to take thimerosal off the market. They turned us down."

The CDC launched its own study of thimerosal safety in vaccines in fall 1999, tasking Dr. Thomas Verstraeten to analyze the agency's Vaccine Safety Datalink, which gathers information on vaccine safety from several health maintenance organizations.

thimerosal, walked a fine line. It said in part: "Although the hypothesis that exposure to thimerosal-containing vaccines could be associated with neurodevelopmental disorders is not established ... the hypothesis is biologically plausible."

In the past year, further studies of thimerosal's connection to autism have been churned out in scientific journals, primarily denying any link. A December 2002 study funded by the National Institutes of Health and published in *The Lancet* claimed thimerosal was safe for babies. An October 2003 study from Denmark also purported to disprove the thimerosal-autism link. The most recent study, published November 1 in *Pediatrics* by Thomas Verstraeten and a CDC colleague, uses the same CDC database but this time erases any connection between thimerosal and neurological damage to children.

If the CDC and FDA seemed to acknowledge the risks of thimerosal four years ago and the need to get mercury out of medical products, today the official stance is to circle the wagons against mounting public and scientific criticism about its handling of the thimerosal issue. "Rational people can think differently, but to resolve this issue they must be honest to the American people," Haley said of the regulators. "They could

come out and say we've cleaned it up, we'll keep it out. But what they do is come up with cockamamie articles and fight back."

The stakes are high for the pharmaceutical industry. Eli Lilly, inventor of thimerosal, was granted protection from lawsuits by parents of autistic children under a short-lived provision slipped into the Homeland Security Act in November 2002 (see sidebar). But hundreds of lawsuits now have been filed against it and other companies, including Merck, GlaxoSmithKline, Aventis Pasteur and American Home Products, which have used thimerosal in children's vaccines. An additional 4,000 claims are pending in the federal Vaccine Injury Compensation Program. "These kids are not going to die. They are going to live 50, 60 years and the cost will be monumental," said Krakow, a New York attorney who filed a case with the vaccine compensation program on behalf of his son. "The political hurdles are the bigger problem. This is so big and gets to the heart of lots of issues, like what I call the government-pharmaceutical complex."

Thimerosal is global

Today, vaccine makers have removed thimerosal from almost all childhood vaccines or created thimerosal-free alternatives. But some still have trace amounts, such as GlaxoSmithKline's Pediatrix, and its DTaP-Hepatitis B vaccine. Aventis Pasteur

manufactures six vaccines for adults using thimerosal, including tetanus and flu, each with 25 micrograms of ethylmercury. Merck's Hepatitis B for adults contains 25 micrograms of ethylmercury. While the health effects of that amount of mercury for adults are unknown, limiting exposure in all forms—in foods and environmentally—should be a priority of the FDA and CDC, according to Kentucky researcher Haley. "They should be working on getting all the mercury out. Thimerosal suppresses the immune system, and if you have some elderly person who has a compromised immune system, a flu shot with thimerosal can pose a risk," Haley said. "They are saying its OK to give to Third World countries where children have compromised immune systems to begin with." (Representatives for Aventis and Merck did not respond to requests for comment on their companies' policies on thimerosal use.) But to date, neither the FDA nor the CDC has issued a clear preference for thimerosal-free vaccines. Many critics believe that is a politically defensive, not a scientifically sound one.

The Third World is the next frontier in the thimerosal debate. Eli Lilly has licensing agreements with drug companies in 40 countries that make thimerosal and market it under the trade name Merthiolate. In countries where sanitary conditions are

Continued on page 28

Eli Lilly and Thimerosal

Thimerosal is an organic compound that is 49.6 percent ethylmercury. Eli Lilly and Co., the Indianapolis-based drug giant, developed and registered thimerosal under its trade name Merthiolate in 1929 and began marketing it as an antibacterial and fungal product. It became the most widely used preservative in vaccines. Thimerosal cannot be used with live cell vaccines, such as MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) or polio, because it would kill the vaccine. The only research looking into the safety of thimerosal was done in 1930 by Eli Lilly-sponsored doctors who injected it into 22 patients with meningitis. The human experiment failed to prove that thimerosal was non-toxic. Nonetheless, researchers H.M. Powell and W.A. Jamieson published a study in September 1931 in the *American Journal of Hygiene* that stated thimerosal had a "low order of toxicity for humans" without mentioning that the 12 human subjects were ill and subsequently died. Internal Lilly documents from the time, however, revealed that the company's researchers were worried about Merthiolate's burning qualities when used on the skin. By 1933, Eli Lilly's Jamieson had "determined the toxicity of thimerosal" when he injected a letter from a researcher who had injected it into dogs and saw severe local reactions, leading him to state, "Merthiolate is

unsatisfactory as a preservative for serum intended for use on dogs."

In the 70 years since thimerosal/Merthiolate was developed, the FDA never required Eli Lilly to conduct clinical studies on its safety despite ample evidence of its toxicity and its high allergic properties. In fact, the FDA today still refers to the 1931 Powell and Jamieson study on its web site as indication of the "safety and effectiveness" of thimerosal as a preservative. Thimerosal/Merthiolate was widely used in eye drops, ear drops, nasal sprays and contact lens solution. In 1988, the FDA finally banned Thimerosal for use in OTC products—18 years after it began a safety review of mercury-containing products. It took another year before the 1990, and the FDA would ask manufacturers to remove thimerosal from children's vaccines. Eli Lilly stopped making Merthiolate-containing products in the mid-80s but still profits from licensing agreements with pharmaceutical companies around the world.

Eli Lilly faces hundreds of civil lawsuits from parents who blame thimerosal for their autistic children at the pharmaceutical giant's headquarters in the White House and in Congress. The elder George Bush said of Lilly's board of directors in the 1970s, "a White House Budget Director, which Daniels was a Lilly executive, Lilly CEO Schreyer, and was

named by President George W. Bush to the Homeland Security Advisory Council." In November 2002, Congress passed a provision tucked into a spending measure for homeland security to indemnify Eli Lilly from lawsuits and require families to seek compensation through the federally funded Vaccine Injury Compensation Program. It was repealed in February 2003 after public outcry. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) still hopes to pass a similar bill. Congressional consideration for Eli Lilly makes sense in the 2002 election cycle: the company gave more than \$1.5 million to federal candidates with three quarters to go. Republicans, making it the fourth biggest giver in the pharmaceutical industry, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. In the current election cycle, the company already has given close to \$230,000 (67 percent to Republicans) to federal candidates.

Lilly may also determine to avoid liability for thimerosal in the coming year. It has a long record of children with neurological problems. This year, the FDA approved Stratera, a new Eli Lilly drug to the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The irony that Eli Lilly profits from damaged children is not lost on parent Robert Krakow. "When Eli Lilly is promoting Stratera or any selling up to 10 percent of children can be helped, you realize that we are all against it."

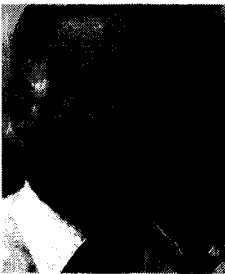
health care

Given the long and sordid history of GOP connections to the pharmaceutical industry, health care and, especially, prescription drugs are issues Democrats usually have in their favor. This makes all the more disturbing recent Republican attempts to co-opt these issues with glossy pronouncements of working for prescription drug coverage while at the same time attaching language to the Homeland Security bill that would absolve drug conglomerates like Eli Lilly from paying damages for thimerosal litigation. Consistent as ever, Bush even awarded a contract to provide "universal health care" to 25 million Iraqis within a year while pushing tax cuts that will add to the already 44 million uninsured Americans. —Williams Cole



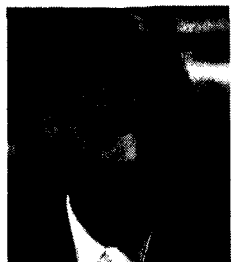
CAROL MOSELEY BRAUN She is one of only two candidates to promote a Canada-style single-payer health plan. Moseley Braun points out that the current health-care system accounts for 15 percent of the GDP, a higher rate than any other industrialized nation, while leaving millions without health insurance. She would introduce a health proposition based on the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program that, because not employer based, would allow freelancers, small business owners and the unemployed to receive health insurance and seniors to receive prescription drug coverage. The payment system would be combined with Medicaid and Medicare in order to reduce bureaucracy and would be financed by hikes in income tax. As a senator in 1994 she fought the pharmaceutical industry-supported Product Liability Fairness Act, a bill that granted significant immunity to drug companies.

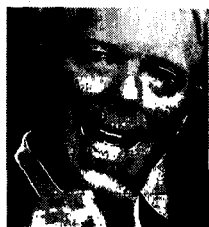
WESLEY CLARK While encouraging in his power to debate Bush regarding the military and foreign policy, one worries that, because his domestic policies are so undeveloped, this candidate may actually be vulnerable during a debate with Dubya on health care. Nevertheless, he has identified health care as a "crisis" in the country but has invited much criticism, if not outright dismissal, from other Democratic candidates, most of whom have well-developed health-care proposals. Time to enlist some good people, General.



HOWARD DEAN The Doctor obviously has a lead in credibility regarding health-related issues—and it seems like a record to boot: He signed into Vermont law an insurance program that gave 99 percent of children health coverage and a third of elderly residents state help with prescription drugs. He also is the only candidate to release a comprehensive plan on prescription drugs, including supporting legalizing drug re-importation from Canada; banning direct ads from drug companies, which have climbed from \$55 million to \$2 billion in the last 12 years; creating a national law that forces physicians to disclose gifts from the pharmaceutical industry; and expanding the list of preferred drug lists that would lead physicians to cheaper yet effective drugs and allow states more flexibility in controlling drug costs. He's also a founder of the Business for Affordable Medicine coalition. But his high profile on medical issues also has invited criticism from other candidates who point out his alignment with Newt Gingrich in 1995 criticizing Medicare and his 2002 attempt to eliminate a prescription drug program in Vermont.

JOHN EDWARDS The southern senator shines among politicians in his battles with pharmaceutical conglomerates and has called the lobbying power of the drug industry "a scary thing to see up close." His successful record as a trial lawyer winning suits against HMOs and the pharmaceutical industry compelled him to fight Republican efforts to absolve litigation against drug companies like Eli Lilly. He said he wants to make health care coverage a "birthright" and has co-sponsored a Patient's Bill of Rights. In June he unveiled a proposal to reduce prescription drug costs. His crusade even earned him the nickname, at least in the *Irish Times*, the "Erin Brockovich of Capitol Hill." He reported small investments in pharmaceutical and health-care company stocks.



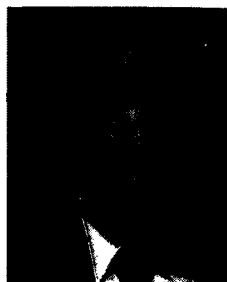


DICK GEPHARDT

Seemingly more and more in an attack mode, Gephardt has criticized Kerry's and Dean's plans, saying they would prevent employers from providing health care, proposing, instead, a system that would build on the existing employer-based system funded by repealing tax cuts implemented by the Bush administration. Gephardt has a good record of speaking out against the pharmaceutical industry and has criticized Republicans for supporting legislation "crafted" by drug companies. "We're going to take on a Republican Party that's been bought by the pharmaceutical industry. We're gonna beat 'em and put policy in that's good for seniors," he said.

JOHN KERRY

With years of service in the Senate battling GOP efforts to change Medicare, Kerry's health-care proposal nonetheless seems a like a comprehensive, yet confusing, mishmash of tax credits, "rebate pools" and changes to federal programs. He has been vocal in appealing to health-care issues in the veteran's community, stating "there are veterans waiting six months just to get their first-time prescriptions from doctors." He's also said "focusing on coverage without reducing the costs of health care for all Americans is treating the symptoms and ignoring the disease, the cause." Unfortunately, the senator reported significant investments in drug companies with reported sales of at least \$545,000 in Merck stock, sales of more than \$100,000 in GlaxoSmithKline stock and purchases of more than \$2 million in Wyeth stock. A trust that benefits Kerry's wife, Teresa Heinz-Kerry, included more than \$1 million in Pfizer stock and a similar amount of stock in the pharmacy chain Walgreens.



DENNIS KUCINICH

Kucinich is one of two candidates to endorse a government-run, universal, single-payer system paid for by reducing defense spending and provides a detailed plan outlining how much it would cost over the next decade. He also has been the only one active with the Vaccine Injury Compensation Panel, asking Congress for an open debate around issues of lawsuits against Eli Lilly for the use of thimerosal. Last January he was part of a group that fought to excise last-minute language in the Homeland Security Bill that would absolve pharmaceutical companies from paying damages. He is the only candidate who would eliminate the role of private health-care providers in favor of a new system that would, among other things, allow the government to reduce expenditures by buying prescription drugs in bulk.

JOSEPH LIEBERMAN

Lieberman has not yet laid out a comprehensive health-care plan, although his record is more positive than his stances on most others. He has come out in favor of legalizing drug re-importation from Canada and changing patent rules to allow for cheaper generic drugs. He also has proposed \$150 billion for the American Center for Cures, which would provide funds to small drug companies to research cures for chronic diseases, and has stated that "no American senior should have to choose between food, rent and the prescription drugs needed to live a decent life." He also has small investments in pharmaceutical and health-care company stocks, and his wife, Hadassah, was a onetime communications director for a pharmaceutical company.



AL SHARPTON

The Reverend has warned congressional Democrats not to compromise with Republicans when it comes to the current prescription drug legislation on Capitol Hill, and has said that instead of spending billions on war, the Bush administration should focus on funding education, housing and prescription drugs for military families and low-income Americans. "Don't love the troops when they are in uniform overseas and not love them when they are in blue jeans at home," he said. He came out in 1994 for a single-payer plan and criticized the plan then drafted by Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) as "a mere touch up." He's silent on any details about a health-care plan. ■

Williams Cole is a contributing editor of the Brooklyn Rail and a former Fulbright scholar in media at the London School of Economics. He also is a documentary filmmaker currently producing a film about New York under Rudy Giuliani.

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Vicious Circle

Shedding light on
a cycle of abuse

By Kari Lydersen



Growing up on Chicago's South Side, Brenda Myers looked up to the prostitutes working outside her window. "I asked my grandmother what those women were doing. She said, 'They take their panties off for money.'"

At age 9 this idea didn't strike Myers as odd—a family member had been molesting her for years—and she grew up understanding that her body would be the way she got by: "I was thinking, well, they're already taking my panties off, and I wasn't getting any money. So I'll make them pay for it," she says.

She did, and like a majority of women working the streets, Myers became mired in a cycle of dependency on drugs, alcohol, prostitution and abusive relationships—a cycle that starts in youth and ends up landing them in jail and prison.

Women are the fastest growing segment of the incarcerated—more than 91,000 were in state and federal prisons in 2000 (a figure that does not include jails). While the number of incarcerated men grew by 77 percent between 1990 and 2000, the female population grew by 108 percent, according to U.S. Department of Justice statistics.

Like Myers, about half the women behind bars are there for nonviolent offenses, primarily prostitution- and drug-related violations and petty theft or fraud, according to the DOJ.

Childhood experiences loom large

And like Myers, a significantly high number of them are victims of childhood sexual abuse. A recent study by the Chicago

Coalition for the Homeless reported that 41 percent of women arrested for prostitution-related offenses in Cook County jail were sexually abused as children.

The Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) conducted a study in which 57 percent of women working as prostitutes in the state reported they were sexually abused as children. The study also found that more than 90 percent lost their virginity through assault, and 70 percent believed being sexually abused as children influenced their decision to become prostitutes.

Likewise, a 1995 study by the National Criminal Justice Reference Service found that people who were sexually abused as children are a whopping 27.7 times more likely than others to be arrested for prostitution.

As Myers describes, many prostitutes say they turned to paid dates as a way to take control of their sexuality after having had it taken from them. Others are forced into prostitution by their abusers—a 2001 study by the Center for Impact Research (CIR) noted that it is common for adults in particularly dire circumstances to force children into prostitution to pay rent or to buy drugs.

A number of women interviewed in Chicago tell similar stories of how they ended up in and out of jail on drug- and prostitution-related offenses. It starts with childhood sexual abuse by a relative or mother's boyfriend, a lifelong psychological trauma for which they often never receive counseling or treatment. Growing up in households where substance abuse and prostitution are prevalent, the women started both at a young age. According to the CIR study, 62 percent of prostitutes have their first "date" before age 18.

"My mother's ex-husband used to have me up in the middle of the night giving him head," says Louise Lofton, another former prostitute in Chicago, who has worked with Myers to form a group called Exodus to help women leave prostitution.

"One time she came in unexpectedly, and he started beating her because he knew he was in the wrong; he wanted to cover up for himself," Lofton says. "I ran into him once when I was in

asked that her name not be used. "They're helping me build up all those things that had been ripped out of me by prostitution."

In general, recovering prostitutes and service providers have a tricky balance to keep. They need to avoid stigmatizing or condemning prostitution as a lifestyle choice and female sexuality as a whole while still acknowledging that, for many, prostitution is a piece of a painful puzzle they want to leave behind.

Studies show that most prostitutes use drugs and alcohol heavily, possibly to help them deal with the stress and emotional issues of the trade.

prostitution—I had this leopard print skirt on. I said, 'This is because of you.' He said, 'I'm sorry.' I said, 'Fuck you.'"

Untreated addictions

Studies also show that almost all women working in prostitution use drugs and alcohol heavily. Many start using these substances or increase their usage in order to deal with the stress and emotional issues of the trade. Others begin to prostitute themselves to fund their drug habits or those of their partners or family members.

For many, the specter of sexual abuse lies behind it all—driving them to seek solace or release in drugs and sex and complicating attempts to change their lives and recover.

"The drug abuse is just one part of it," says Tracy Banks-Geiger, the court and jail program coordinator at Genesis House, a free residential recovery program for women in prostitution in Chicago. "There are also issues of poverty, racism and childhood sexual abuse that never received any treatment."

Doing harder time

Women bear the brunt of prostitution incarcerations. Johns usually face heavy fines—under a Chicago city ordinance they are charged \$700 in fines and car impoundment fees—but then, in the vast majority of cases, charges are dropped. Male pimps are likewise rarely arrested.

Along with this sexism, racism also plays in the challenges and threats faced by prostitutes. ICASA says that while 40 percent of street prostitutes are women of color, women of color constitute 55 percent of those arrested and 85 percent of those sentenced to jail time.

Dealing with sexual abuse and related traumas is key to breaking the cycle of incarceration and abuse. But most prisons and jails offer little in the way of support groups and counseling, and it can be even harder to access free resources once women get out.

Piecing together a life

In Chicago, several former prostitutes report that they were finally able to leave the lifestyle after finding support groups and programs that addressed both substance abuse and the physical and psychological issues involved in their early lives. Many women have had success at Genesis House, the only institution in the city accredited by the courts as an alternative to jail time. Genesis House is a strict yearlong residential program available free to walk-ins and women referred by the courts.

"They're very gentle and patient with me and don't rush me into anything," says a 32-year-old Genesis House resident who

To break the cycle of sexual abuse, prostitution, drugs and incarceration, many women note that there must be fundamental change in a society that allows or even encourages the exploitation of children and women.

"If it wasn't for men you wouldn't have prostitution," Myers says. "They think it's a joke, she's having a ball. No she isn't! They think they didn't do anything wrong. Women need to be taught that their body isn't an offering or a sacrifice." ■

Kari Lydersen is a writer based in Chicago.

Domini Cares...

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Resisting Globalization

The South American consensus By David Moberg

The United States is having trouble selling the latest model of souped-up global trade deals as a cure-all for the world's economic ills. First, talks in Cancun last September to expand the World Trade Organization collapsed. Now talks scheduled in Miami for November 17-21 to create a new free trade agreement for the Western Hemisphere likely will be marked by conflict and similarly end in stalemate.

One conflict will be between the Bush administration and demonstrators, who oppose the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) and hope to mount the largest U.S. protest against corporate globalization since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, dampened a growing popular movement.

But the trade ministers will not be able to blame the protestors alone for their likely failure in negotiating the FTAA. Opposition in Latin America is widespread; hemispheric governments disagree over what should be in the agreement, and more and more economists are recognizing that the model for economic development embodied in FTAA is deeply flawed.

Negotiators had planned to wrap up talks on this new agreement, which the United States hopes will be modeled on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), by the end of 2004. But Brazil and the United States, the negotiation co-chairs, are deeply divided. Several Latin American countries want to slow down negotiations or set aside touchy issues the United States is pushing—like expanded rights for investors—until the United States is willing to remove trade barriers and agricultural subsidies that give U.S. exports an unfair advantage. The United States also is insisting that FTAA go beyond NAFTA and deregulate all services. Countries would then have to negotiate to exclude any service they did not want deregulated. Latin Americans fear that free trade in all services could lead to the privatization of telecommunications, water delivery and even education.

Equally important, Latin Americans, having had a bad experi-


ence with “liberalization” of markets over the past two decades, are strongly against the kinds of radical free market policies that FTAA would impose.

Negotiators face sticking points

Domestic politics in individual countries also will complicate discussions. With a presidential election a year away, the Bush administration is unwilling to talk about a key issue for Brazil: the high tariffs protecting the Florida citrus industry from Brazilian competition. And most of the Democratic presidential contenders are critical to varying degrees of trade strategies like FTAA, even though it was launched under Bill Clinton. Very little in the preliminary FTAA text protects worker rights and the environment, a minimal demand of most candidates. The United States is likely to propose that countries agree to enforce their own laws, but AFL-CIO trade expert Thea Lee argues that such a provision would have less influence with traditional labor rights violators, like Central American countries, than existing labor rights protections in the U.S. trade law, which requires countries to live up to core international standards to qualify for special tariff reductions.

Neoliberal policies, including NAFTA, have not worked well for most of Latin America since they began to be imposed or adopted during the “lost decade” of the '80s. During that time Latin American countries, saddled with a massive foreign debt, averaged annual economic decline of eight-tenths of a percent per year, compared with average growth of 2.9 percent a year from 1960 to 1980. And starting in 1990, a boom decade in the United States, Latin American economies grew only an average of 1.6 percent a year. During even that period of growth, inequality and poverty in Latin America remained extremely high or got worse.

In a recent poll, only 16 percent of a broad cross-section of Latin Americans expressed satisfaction with the free market model. According to the *Financial Times*, “Most Latin Americans live in fear of losing their jobs and believe the free



A Demonstration against the
Free Trade Area of the Americas
on the U.S.-Mexico border.

market reforms of the past decade have done little to improve their living standards."

Bolivians defend resources

In one of the most dramatic recent expressions of that sentiment, Bolivians blockaded roads and staged mass protests, bringing down neoliberal President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada on October 21. The protests were triggered by plans of President "Goni" to sell U.S. corporations natural gas via a new pipeline through Chile. But Bolivian peasants and miners know from centuries of experience that exports of their country's natural resources have benefited only the wealthy elite—like Goni. And they understand that since the mid-'80s when Goni was an architect of radical free market, or neoliberal, policies, inequality has increased and most Bolivians were worse off than before.

Cheap agricultural imports have since driven many peasants off the land and into urban settlements like El Alto, the center of the most militant clashes with security forces. Peasants also were incensed at the Bolivian government's enforcement of an anti-free market plan by the United States to eradicate coca, a traditional Andean crop that provided much-needed cash.

Washington Consensus crumbles

In recent years, popular uprisings against neoliberalism have led to new governments in Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela—the countries that are now the greatest FTAA skeptics. Massive popular protests also have shaken Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, Colombia and Mexico. The governments in Uruguay, Paraguay

and the Caribbean also have resisted much of the U.S. agenda. All governments in Latin America, even those most solicitous of the United States, know they are negotiating the FTAA with a loaded and angry popular movement cocked at their political heads.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has greatly misjudged the effectiveness of the "Washington Consensus" model for development, which emphasizes export-led growth, open markets, deregulation, privatization and fiscal austerity. In 13 of the last 17 years, the IMF has overestimated growth in Latin America for the coming year by an average of 1.6 percent, according to Dean Baker and David Rosnick of the Washington-based Center for Economic and Policy Research.

The rosy projections also have led to the implementation of bad policies that in turn have increased unemployment and have left Latin Americans once again drowning in debt.

"The principles of the Washington Consensus are not a useful guide to promote economic growth in Latin America," Harvard University economics professor and trade expert Dani Rodrik told the World Bank last March. "The periods of economic growth have no relation with the policies of integration to the world economy."

Trade talks hinder growth

Trade negotiations have been oversold as a way for countries to develop, Rubens Ricupero, secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), said in October. According to UNCTAD's annual report, Latin

Continued on page 28

Stale Air and Dearest Freshness

By Eugene McCarraher

Four decades ago, Dwight Macdonald rued the impending triumph of "Midcult," an "agreeable ooze" of denatured high culture produced for the college-educated. Curtis White's *The Middle Mind* surpasses Macdonald's work. Where Macdonald thought Midcult a merely insipid affair, White contends that the Middle Mind is ardently imperial in its militarization of irony and mediocrity. And if Macdonald longed for a new modernist vanguard, White envisions a complete reconstruction of our aesthetic and moral imagination.

A novelist and professor of English at Illinois State University in Normal-Bloomington, White seeks to rekindle a "spirit of refusal" that has animated other writers: Theodore Roszak, Herbert Marcuse and Paul Goodman. And like the romantic and artisanal tradition—John Ruskin, William Morris, Randolph Bourne and Lewis Mumford—White traces our cul-

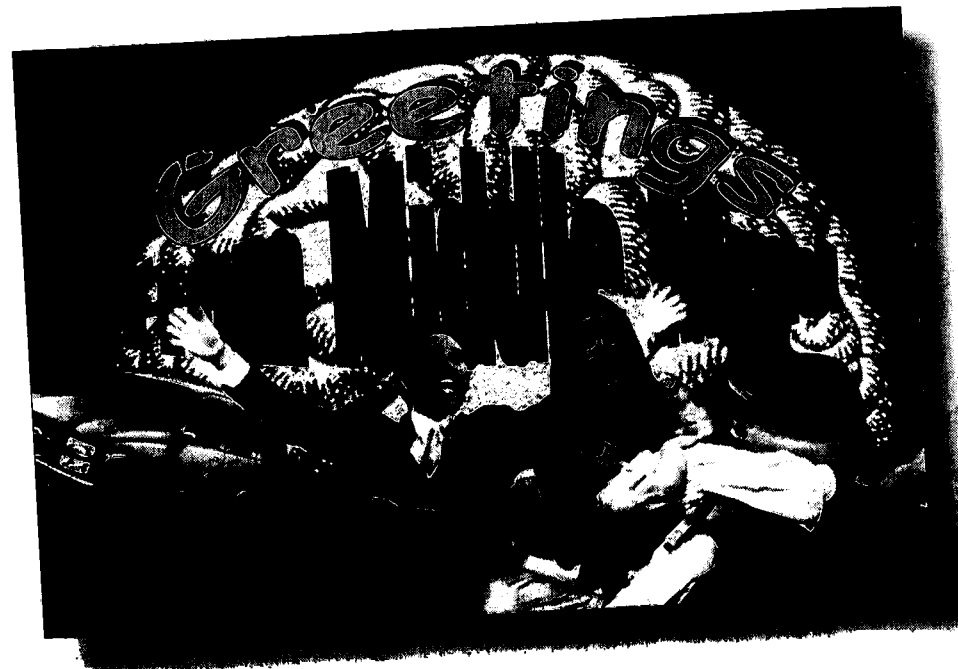
The Middle Mind: Why Americans Don't Think for Themselves

By Curtis White
HarperSanFrancisco
205 pages, \$23.95

tural maladies to the dullness of our daily labors, upholds the artist's devotion to craft as a cure for our spiritual sickness, and recoils from cant, however "progressive." And, also like them, he's a pleasure to read.

White provides an account of how the Middle Mind paralyzes the creative imagination through "entertainment, orthodoxy, and ideology"; how it leavens what we might refer to as the National Banality State, a jejune, complacent and belligerent behemoth that embraces the media, the government, the military, the academy and religion; and how it extends the dominion of mediocrity to every corner of the globe, reducing to niceness every pocket of resistance to its artillery of bombs and blandness.

Like many a demon, the Middle Mind wears a friendly face. It enjoins a soccer-parent centrism that opposes "discrimination" and embraces "inclusiveness" and



"tolerance." Lacking any substantive political convictions other than a commitment to "choice"—reproductive rights, consumer sovereignty and capital accumulation—Middle Minders cultivate no abiding connections to any political party. Spoonfed on irony, they're too facetious to reconcile moral contradictions, of which they're vaguely aware. As White encapsulates it, the Middle Mind "wants to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," having "bought an SUV with the intent of visiting it."

Nonpartisan in politics, Middle Minders are "spiritual" rather than "religious," put off by doctrine and inclined to assert that "all religions really believe the same thing." They are "curious" and "well-informed," and "appreciate" the arts and letters. They attend "cultural events," pledge money to PBS, purchase hardcover books and avoid fast food. In pop sociology and cultural criticism, they are the "creative class," as Richard Florida christens them, or the suburban Bobos of David Brooks.

Yet underneath the health-conscious coating is a poison for culture and politics. Despite its "good-faith effort," the Middle Mind's aversion to complexity and talent marks it as "a form of *management*," an effort to orchestrate anything potentially

unruly. Fearful of the discipline required for genuine creativity, Middle Minders turn culture into a "lifestyle amenity," an item in the gourmet ensemble of upscale consumers. The arts and letters must be as readily consumable and as agreeably exotic as the selections at Starbucks. They must be smart but not demanding, intriguing but not disturbing. As White observes, the Middle Mind prefers the moral and aesthetic fraudulence of *American Beauty*'s "accommodation of all political positions" to *Blue Velvet*'s discomforting "refusal to condemn or condone" the violence of Frank Booth.

Beholden to "civility," Middle Minders prefer the comfort of consensus to the excitement of genuine conflict in art, religion, or politics. Their fretful righteousness about "discrimination" postpones necessary aesthetic, moral or political distinctions, while their distaste for "militancy" hides fanatical devotion to their own possessive individualism. This Middle Minder's Pavlovian reflex to flatten distinctions derives, White suspects, from the need to abort all serious challenges to the established order. Thus, Middle Mind irony gives us "a world without honor or truthfulness," while its "charm and banality" supplant the insolence and stringency of lively imagina-

tion, promoting "a culture of mediocrity that forbids real intelligence."

The nation about nothing

White's real intelligence dispels the charm of many a Middle Mind eminence. It's an unguilty pleasure to see Terry Gross receive overdue and merited derision, as White gleefully savages the incompetence and voyeurism of a show that should be titled *Stale Air*. After all the celebration of "Seinfeld" as "the show about nothing," many might applaud White's dismissal of people like Gross "who can say with a straight face that 'Seinfeld' was a great show because of the brilliant script-writing." And White's reading of Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* as "a crypto-fascist work of historical revision" is a small masterpiece of film criticism.

The Middle Mind's facile reverence toward *Saving Private Ryan* demonstrates to White that Americans, having "internalized the military and its imperatives," now play in the theater of what Paul Virilio has termed "Pure War," the condition in which the boundary between peace and war is erased. (The war in Iraq, for instance, began in 1991 and ended...) Basking in the resplendence of mediocrity, Middle Minders are addicted to security, a missionary drive that is inseparable from their determination to impose everywhere their tony, mercantile niceness. (Thomas Friedman could be the exemplary Middle Mind imperialist.)

On this score, many readers will dispute one of White's sharpest contentions: "The idea that Americans do not know about the nefariousness of the powerful is finally not credible." Impatient with leftish populism, White rejects Noam Chomsky's notion of a "manufacture of consent" and posits "the New Censorship," in which the powerful rule by "making everything known and naked." Relying on the cheerfully mendacious nihilism of Middle Mind America, the military-entertainment complex allows a "perverse transparency" that turns "betrayed trust" into a "yummy fetish." Is our government a den of avaricious and brutal thieves? Yes, and "there's hardly a soul on these shores who doesn't know it."

So the problem is not, in White's account, that Americans don't know the truth. They don't care about the truth, and they don't so much trust the system as "suspect in some dim way that, bad as

it surely is, it is working in our interests in the long run." And so, in the end, our Middle Mind culture is neither conformist nor subversive; rather, it is "corrupt, cynical and cruel." We are soft-headed and cold-hearted ironists shopping at the end of history. Lies, venality, violence, death—"whatever." "Seinfeld" is the perfect show for the nation about nothing.

So how does one cure what Mark Crispin Miller once called "the hipness unto death"? Not, for one thing, by following New Age, with its Middle Mind aversion to discrimination ("All is One") and its prescriptions for "making ourselves individually well." Why start a revolution when you have Feng Shui? And in academia, "Cultural Studies" radicalism exhibits the "abstract, rationalist" jargon that marks it

Middle Minders are addicted to security, a missionary drive that is inseparable from their determination to impose everywhere their tony, mercantile niceness.

as a form of "resistance" tailor-made for the corporate university.

White turns instead to the promise of "imagination" and its moments in art, philosophy and religion. Drawing on the Russian Formalism of the 1920s, White maintains that "greatness" in art depends on "estrangement," a perception from unfamiliar vantages that then tells us something "truer and more complete" about the world. And to estrange fruitfully, we must summon Wallace Stevens' "necessary angel" of imagination, who throws a searchlight on the possibilities inherent in reality. "The imagination makes the world bloom through the moment of estrangement," White declares.

Sure that, quoting Stevens, "the imagination has the strength of reality, or none at all," White directs attention to metaphysics. Calling for a renewal of aspiration toward "the sublime"—the knowledge of totality that attracts and eludes our love—White beckons toward

a "pragmatic sublime" informed by American pragmatism.

By embracing pragmatism, White joins a generation of American philosophers and intellectual historians eager (desperate?) to set progressive politics on a philosophical foundation. But it's at least arguable that pragmatism's anti-metaphysical character explains its easy enlistment for state and corporate purposes. As Bourne once pointed out, pragmatism's "unhappy ambiguity" as to "just how values are created" lay behind John Dewey's support for American entry into World War I.

Before embracing pragmatism, White flirts with religion. He makes the (I think indisputable) assertion that the modern separation of sacred and secular enables "certain, mostly unfortunate, acts in the name of politics and the state." Believers abound among his heroes of imagination: Aquinas, Dante, Kierkegaard, Hopkins. But like a good Middle Minder, White eschews theological disputation, retreating to Blake's New Age aphorism that "a man must invent his own religion."

Deep down things

Thus, White ignores the metaphysical concerns of so many of his imaginative heroes. Asserting that the poems of Dante and Hopkins were "first profoundly consonant works of imagination," he forgets that they were first profoundly consonant works of faith whose theological content was their very marrow. When Hopkins, for instance, wrote "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things," he was celebrating the world as a sacramental portal onto divinity. It was on that basis that he lamented a world "bleared, smeared with toil."

White rightly fears the sway of a Middle Mind similarly bleared and smeared. But for all his critical and prescriptive audacity, he can't fully acknowledge and embrace the critical power, intellectual versatility and political intelligence contained in theology. If, as White muses, some "spiritual turn" may be our only hope for "the internal dissolution of the empire," might the strongest solvent of the Middle Mind order be "the dearest freshness deep down things?" ■

Eugene McCarragher teaches humanities and history at Villanova University. He will be reviewing Slavoj Žižek's *The Puppet and The Dwarf* in a forthcoming issue.

We Sold Our Soul for Rocanrol

By Benjamin Ortiz

In March 1989, University of Texas at Austin premed student Mark Kilroy disappeared during a drunken spree that led him and hundreds of spring-breakers from South Padre Island across the Texas border into Matamoros, Mexico. What promised

The Mexicutioner! The Best of Brujería
Brujería
Roadrunner Records (September 2003)

to be a carefree week of surf, sun and cheap Mexican liquor became grisly grist for tabloids, as an international manhunt eventually discovered Kilroy's body and the mutilated remains of at least a dozen others in a mass grave, located at what came to be known as Hell Ranch.

The gruesome slaughter of mostly poor Mexicans might have been buried forever had it not been for Kilroy, a clean-cut American with family connections to U.S. Customs authorities. It turned out that a drug-running cult had ritually sacrificed these victims to dark forces in order to secure supernatural protection against the police. Inspired by a mix of Caribbean religions and voodoo-themed movies such as *The Believers*, the cult's charismatic leader subsequently expired in a bloody shootout with Mexico City *federales*.

Likewise inspired, the hardcore *narco-Satánico* death metal group Brujería seized on the Hell Ranch butchery as a symbol of cultural resistance to Anglo incursion, tapping into the nexus of history and hysteria surrounding the status of Mexicans in the United States. But far from an earnest commitment to the prince of darkness, their embrace of horrific, diabolical imagery consists more of that American rock pose—scaring the hell out of mom and dad, whether through pelvis-shaking rhythms or parental advisory warnings. Scholar José Limón described this balance of Latino cultural accommodation—specifically through the mix of music and communal standards—as a sort of boogie-woogie with Beelzebub, in 1994's *Dancing With the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas*.

On October 2, 2003, a rock show at Chicago's Aragon Ballroom commemorated the 35th anniversary of another such massacre, of student protestors at Tlatelolco, Mexico City. But 18-year-old Mex-American *rockero* Erik Duarte hadn't heard about lurid 1989 machete murders in Matamoros or about recently declassified documents showing that government snipers opened fire on the students in 1968. His teenage band Kardoid opened for Brujería, launching into the chorus of their song "Amén": "¡Soy Satánico!" (*I am Satanic!*). The audience of largely Mex-



Dancing with Diablo

descent teens and twentysomethings, clad in camouflage and Guevara chic, responded raucously with the rock cliché devil sign, holding up the index and pinky fingers to mime Satan's horns. "‘Soy Satánico’ means I’m tired of being judged as a freak for how I dress and the music I listen to," Duarte emotes over the feedback. "It's like saying I'm your worst nightmare, I'm the devil, whatever you're afraid of."

Typically, in much Latin hard rock,

crunching power chords conflate politics and pop culture, and the Mexican *grito*—a commonplace vocalization of sorrow and celebration—serves as the *rockero* gloss on everything from European conquest to immigrant *reconquista* of the Americas.

Recasting Norteño accordion music, Brujería metallizes the *narco-corrido*, an updated troubadour tradition that lionizes smugglers and border-hoppers to the status of national heroes. And honoring Subcomandante Marcos, band members cloak their faces in macho outlaw pose, adopting such *nom de guerre* monikers as Juan Brujo (Juan Witch), Asesino (Assassin), and Fantasma (Phantasm). They claim consort with Satan, sing the praises of the mom-and-pop-killing Menendez Brothers and Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar and exhort every pot-smoking *greñudo* (longhair) to spill whitey's blood on turf stolen from Mexico (e.g. the album *Matando Güeros*, "Killing Honkies"). Chronicling current events much like *corrido* singers, Brujería speaks to such travails as Proposition 187 (on the song "Pito Wilson"), border-crossing casualties ("La Migra"), and the Zapatista uprising ("Revolución"). On the track "Consejos Narcos" ("Advice for Narcos"), Juan Brujo articulates the basic truths of drug running for Satanists. In a humorously bizarre equation, he also reduces nightmarish fantasies of Satanism and Communism to the reality of the Mexican P.R.I.: "Comunismo, Satanismo, P.R.I.—es lo mismo ("Revolución").

The recent *Best of Brujería* release charts the band's rise as a pioneering Spanish-language metal band formed from Mexican rockers and American collaborators. With liner notes by Hank Williams III, the disc gives a sense of their aggressive pose effected by an aural barrage of growling, slashing barbarity that sounds anything but typically "Mexican." But as their recent show at the Aragon demonstrates, Brujería is proof of rock 'n' roll's absorption into the immigrant soul—as a space of simultaneous resistance and capitulation to bedeviling American culture. ■

Ben Ortiz is a writer based in Chicago.

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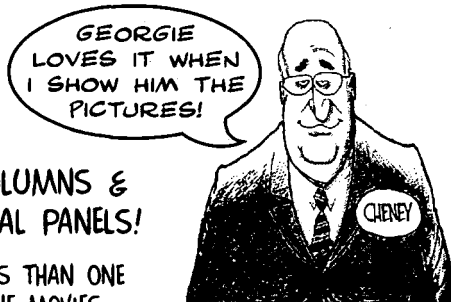
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Autism in a Needle? (cont'd from page 17)

questionable, vaccine preservatives become crucial. Single-dose vials rather than multi-dose containers have provided one solution in the United States, but in the developing world that strategy poses challenges and costs. The World Health Organization (WHO), which has a vast vaccination program, assessed the thimerosal issue in 1999, prompted by the U.S. health agencies' review. The agency echoed the U.S. position and declared in its weekly newsletter: "With the weight of public opinion against the use of mercury of any sort, WHO and other agencies has begun the process of reducing and removing [thimerosal] from vaccines." The WHO outlined a three-year plan for creating alternative preservatives and new vaccine delivery technologies with the goal of eventually eliminating mercury.

Yet in 2003, WHO abandoned this aggressive plan and issued a revised policy on thimerosal, citing its own vaccine advisory committee's decision that ethylmercury is less harmful than methylmercury, and that "there is no reason on grounds of safety to change immunization practices with [thimerosal]-containing vaccines since the benefit outweighs any risks." What happened over four years, according to Dr. Philippe Duclos, coordinator of WHO's Immunization Safety Project, was a dose of reality. "Taking thimerosal away was more tricky than originally thought," he said. "Taking it away might have created a vaccine with a lower safety profile. And the use of monodose vaccines in many places is difficult because of production capacity. Changing the capacity is a major investment, and you can't just assume things will be done correctly. It takes time."

Duclos insisted that recent research has shown risks associated with thimerosal are more theoretical than real—and so far alternatives are elusive. "Vaccine distribution in developing countries is a tricky thing. If you use monodose, products will overload the cold chain [the process by which vaccines are maintained at between 2 and 8 degrees Celsius]. Expanding that capacity would take a tremendous amount of time and money and it becomes a matter of priorities."

For U.S. pharmaceuticals, though, the global market for vaccines containing thimerosal is a goldmine. UNICEF, the WHO's parent body, purchases 40 percent of all vaccines used in developing countries and Merck is its sole supplier. Merck makes Recombivax HB, a Hepatitis B vaccine that contains thimerosal.

Beyond the issue of thimerosal's link to autism and developmental disorders lies the larger question of public trust in national vaccination programs—in the United States and the developing world, where global agencies like the WHO and its health programs can be viewed as politically suspect. The thimerosal debacle at the FDA and CDC, with its taint of conflicts of interest with big drug companies and compromised research, does more harm than good, given that the medical community's primary directive is "First, do no harm."

"I am a farm boy. I own a farm today. I am a person who knows the value of vaccinations," [Haley] said. "But if the American people realize how the CDC and the vaccine boards work, they are going to lose faith, and that isn't my doing. It's their own doing." ■

Resisting Globalization (cont'd from page 23)

American policies that focused on free markets and "getting prices right" blocked technological change and capital accumulation needed for growth. Former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz argues that getting institutions right, which includes greater democracy and unionization of workers, is at least as important to make trade work. Further, developing countries should grow by increasing domestic demand through implementing policies that raise incomes of workers and peasants as much as by exporting goods.

Although NAFTA is the model for FTAA, Mexico's experience is not inspiring. Timothy Wise from Tufts University's Global Development and Environment Institute recently reported that since Mexico began opening its markets, economic and job growth have been slow, job quality and wages have declined, poverty has increased, environmental quality has deteriorated, the rural sector is in crisis, and

Mexico has a global balance of payments deficit despite its trade surplus with the United States. Corporations have used NAFTA's provision for investor lawsuits against governments to pursue—and typically win—millions of dollars in compensation from all three NAFTA governments for regulations designed to protect public health and the environment.

Free marketeers eye Brazil

Venezuela, which under Hugo Chavez has become the FTAA's fiercest critic, wants as a precondition the establishment of a development fund like the one the European Union established for integrating poorer member countries. Also, if the United States won't discuss its procedures to fight dumping or agriculture subsidies, then Brazil is not interested in discussing deregulation of services or investor protections. Meanwhile, Brazil is trying to consolidate Latin American trading relationships, while the United States is using

a combination of threats and promises to establish bilateral trade relations with individual countries such as Chile and with smaller groups of countries like the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which may be completed this year.

The United States' veiled threats to negotiate FTAA without Brazil are hollow because that South American giant is the big corporate prize. "Going after bilaterals and the Central American Free Trade Agreement is all about getting Brazil, backing them into a corner and making them feel they have to give in," says Sarah Anderson, director of the global economy project at the Institute for Policy Studies.

While Bush has domestic political reasons to postpone negotiations, his corporate allies feel they're in a race against time. Popular resistance to the policies enshrined in FTAA is growing. "They figure if they don't lock it in now," says Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, "it won't be possible." ■

Images of human beings don't appear in the world conjured in the posters of the Beehive Design Collective. But, filtered through an intricate narrative of metaphor and allegory, the posters depict a world recognizably and disturbingly our own. It is the world of corporate globalization—contemporary colonialism and imperialism—and people's resistance to it, all explained in pictures.

The Collective is a political graphics workshop based in an old Grange hall (a legacy of the anti-corporate Populist organizing of the late 19th century) in eastern Maine. Since 2000, tens of thousands of their posters have been distributed on "pollination tours" through college campuses, high schools and community centers and at large-scale convergences such as the April 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, Canada. This fall's tour will bring the collective to the Miami protests of the Free Trade Area of the Americas meetings from November 17-21 and the School of the Americas protest in Georgia from November 21-23.

The Beehive artists prefer not to give their names, or to describe themselves as artists. "Instead of calling ourselves 'artists,' we call ourselves 'cultural workers,'" a female bee explained in a pollination tour stopover at Yale University in October. They are "bees," they say, and their mission is to "cross-pollinate the grassroots." They are "anti-copyright" and encourage people to download their graphics from www.beehivecollective.org and put it to a political purpose.

Since 2001, the Bees have been working on a trilogy of posters on corporate globalization. Parts one and two dealt with the proposed FTAA trade agreement and Plan Colombia, the catchall name for U.S. military and corporate intervention in that South American country. The third poster will focus on Plan Puebla-Panama, a mega-infrastructure development project for southern Mexico and Central America designed to facilitate corporate exploitation of the region.

In creating the Plan Colombia poster, Collective members spent four months in Colombia and neighboring Ecuador talking to social justice and *campesino* groups. What they learned was then woven into a visually challenging but coherent narrative web. The Bees wanted to show not only what they oppose—war, corporate control and ecocide—but also what they support: strong communities, labor solidarity, grassroots organizing and sustainable agriculture.

Rather than rely on graphic portrayal of the indigenous people and the occupying powers, the posters employ plants and animals that are region-specific. The Bees depict an AWAK radar surveillance plane as a flying scorpion and liken the coca-fumigating cropdusters to locusts. Blood-sucking mosquitos with corporate logos on their sides extract resources, visiting ecological destruction on the countryside. Popular resistance to this assault is the job of leaf cutter ants. The leaf cutters were chosen, according to the Bee who addressed a group of students at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, "because they are amazing agriculturalists who farm trees" without destroying them. They cut away at the edges of Colombia's "nightmare" to reveal the thriving society and natural wealth beneath.

Following the FTAA and SOA convergences, Collective members will continue to Mexico and Central America, accumulating input for their Plan Puebla-Panama poster and spending New Year's Eve in Chiapas to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Zapatista uprising. Then, in March, it's time to swarm to the Americas Social Forum in Quito, Ecuador. ■

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For ordering information about Plan Colombia, Biodevastation and other Beehive posters, or to learn more about the group's upcoming Biodiversity Crossroads Mural project, visit beehivecollective.org.





Hank Hoffman
on the Beehive Collective

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